

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**The Jesuit Educational
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Sexuality and Spirituality

Leadership in Changing Times

Functionalism Undermining Priesthood

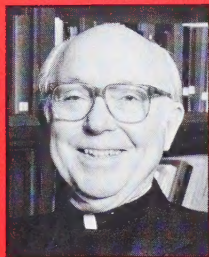
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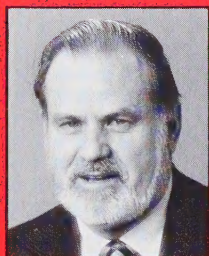
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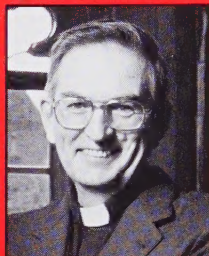
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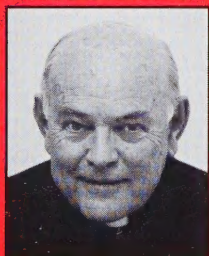
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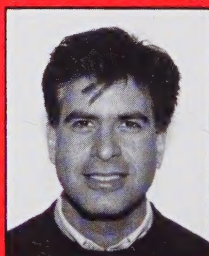
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EDITOR'S PAGE

MILLENNIUM EVE INVITES REDEDICATION

With increasing frequency, the media are reminding us these days that Y2K and the new millennium are nearly upon us. Books, magazine articles, and television programs are reviewing the outstanding events of our ending century, and some of them are recalling the peak moments of the whole passing millennium. The media are also offering guesses about what the future century is likely to bring. But everyone knows from experience that it's a lot easier to achieve some certainty about the past than to predict what will occur in or characterize the future.

Personally, I find it a fascinating mental exercise to sit back and consider the things that are now part of our lives but were completely absent from life at the beginning of this century, when my parents were children. I try to picture what everyday existence was like for people who at that time never saw or had the use of automobiles, television, radios, airplanes, movies, telephones, computers, microwave ovens, antibiotics, the Internet, air conditioning, air mail, or compact discs. They couldn't even buy a map that would show the paths and dirt roads that served as connectors for American cities and towns.

At the start of the twentieth century, no one but God could have foreseen all those things and countless others that have been developed to make our lives what they are at this moment in history. Certainly, the same must be true for the new creations that will be invented and become commonplace by the end of the century about to begin. Try guessing what sorts of homes and offices, modes of transportation, liturgical worship, popular music, oceanic mining, new Olympic sports, educational institutions, military weaponry, and medical practices will appear on the scene before the year 2100 comes

around. Not easy to speculate about such things, is it? Still, we can now be certain about some events that will happen in the future.

We can be sure that the church will have new popes and that our nation will have new presidents. New authors will write our books; new composers, our world's latest music. New coaches, players, and styles of play will appear on the scene; new spiritual and moral leaders will guide the young and religious believers. New playwrights, directors, and producers will control the entertainment industry that will reshape the attitudes and values of people all over the world. New philanthropists will determine which projects and programs will provide cultural enrichment for the nation's future. And long before the new century ends, we can be sure that those of us who are today concerned about Y2K and its implications will be long gone, almost all our names totally forgotten.


But there is something we can all do if we want to influence significantly the world that will emerge in the new century and to enhance the lives of those who will take our place on this most blessed of planets. We can remind ourselves, when we pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," that our Creator has high hopes for this world of ours—a divine vision or dream. We can also face the fact that we need to do more than just ask God to make this a better world in which our descendants will live and, we hope, thrive. Our role in making the Lord's dream a reality calls for us to influence constructively *now* the development of the young, who will soon be determining what life will be like for themselves and their children in tomorrow's universe.

We might well use these present days—the eve of the new millennium—to rededicate ourselves to the task of wholeheartedly investing our time, energy, talents, experience, beliefs, skills and other God-given resources in the lives of the young people who will be inheriting the world from us. The develop-

ment of this mature attitude and behavior on our part (psychologists call it "generativity") demands a great deal of reflection, generosity, and love.

These final months before the pivotal moment when the current and future millennia will meet are offering us a golden opportunity to add greater-than-ever intensity to our efforts to make the world, and life, better for those who will grow up in the twenty-

first century. The task is a divine one. It involves our collaboration with God.



James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.
Editor-in-Chief

A Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I am 36 years old and 5 years in vocation. I felt that Sean Sammon's article "The Last Call for Religious Life" was a good summary and challenge for us as to what we need to do as religious to respond to the vocation crisis, investing more time getting to know Generation X, advertising, making ourselves known, etc. I feel that all these are important, but just as important is our witness to our total commitment to God.

I know that for myself, at age 24, being very caught up in the world and worldly ways, what had more of an impact on me than any recruiting efforts done by religious was my personal witness of a particular priest's total commitment to God. What was more important than anything in particular that he did was his witness of a life that was centered totally on God. It was only this that could cut through my tough shell of worldliness to bring me to realize my own vocation.

I feel that an important part of our addressing the vocation crisis is our taking an in-depth and sincere look at ourselves and our witness. I feel that "the world" is all around

us and easily infiltrates our desire for total commitment. Worldly values or attractions can become part of our everyday life without our realizing it, and I think they decrease our witness of gospel values and our total commitment to God. Once we lose this, we lose our ability to attract vocations. One thing I've come to realize is that the world will always applaud us for adopting its ways, but I think that once we do, we've lost some of the strength of our witness; we've become less of a sign of contradiction, and less able to attract people from the world to make a total commitment.

From my standpoint as a "young" religious, any effort to change the vocation crisis has to start with an honest look at our own lives and our witness. Are we witnessing a deep, sincere, self-sacrificing commitment to God, or has our own witness been diminished by giving in to worldly values or attractions? I think that this is where we need to start in addressing the vocation crisis before other efforts will make a significant difference.

Sr. Mary Felice, D.C.
Bridgeport, Connecticut

Sexuality and Spirituality

Joan H. Timmerman, Ph.D.

What are young women saying about their sexual lives in relation to their spiritual journeys? For the past fifteen years I have taught the elective course "Sexuality and Spiritual Growth" at the College of Saint Catherine, a comprehensive urban college in St. Paul, Minnesota, for women. The course offers credit in theology and women's studies. The majority of the students whose opinions are reflected in this article are 20 to 22 years old, though an increasing percentage of students are over 25 and returning to complete a degree. These older students often come back to school as single parents or after some other major life disruption. Typically, they are in search of newness in both identity and relationships.

Since 1990 I have asked students for permission to use passages from selected papers they have written—passages that help convey a sense of the transformation of awareness, value, and commitment that accompanies their academic study of sexuality within a theological context. Many of these women are from rural midwestern towns and are in the first generation of their families to attend college; others come from such cities as Chicago, New York, Missoula, Omaha, Denver, and San Diego. The international students from Africa, Asia, France, Denmark, the Czech Republic, and Australia add interesting

perspectives and sometimes stop the conversation short with stories of initiation and courtship that confound all expectations.

The insights offered in this essay are not conclusions based on research. Rather, they are bits of truth-telling by women about their own lives.

NEW ATTITUDES TOWARD SEXUALITY

Young women are hoping to claim their place on the future side of a paradigm shift. While not all have participated consciously in, or even been aware of, the shift from traditional to postmodern attitudes toward the body, they know that something major has happened between their parents' childhoods and their own maturity. An academic witness would say that the mind-body split that has dominated Western thinking for two millennia has lost its power. One student explained,

It never occurred to any of us [as children] that people had sex for any other reason than to have children. Some of our parents had talked to us about sex, but they'd never told us that it was pleasurable. In all fairness, I'm not sure that I would have believed my mother if she had told me this, it seemed like such a gross thing to do, why would anyone do it unless they had to?

Sex can certainly be a spiritual, loving experience shared by two married heterosexuals intent on creating a family, but sexuality as a whole encompasses far more than this traditional "Catholic" norm. It may be that parents are afraid to educate their children about sexuality in its entirety because they don't want to encourage behavior that falls outside the realm of the traditional religious norm.

But neither do traditional Catholic norms prepare the laity to expect a full, rich, and intentional spiritual life. Why should we be surprised to discover that norms that define the minimal in terms of spirituality also support the minimal in the sexual sphere? The theology of marriage, had it developed in another direction from that which we know historically, might have disclosed carnal intimacy as full of rich and pleasurable sexuality. The monastic way, after all, promised the ecstatic joys of the unitive way to the selected few. As it is, we now must utilize the tool we have: a spirituality that is increasingly being claimed as the primary call of all. Spirituality is the force that promises to heal the scars, anger, and regret that remain from our sexual unfolding. Spirituality is described, for the purpose of discussing sexual development, to be coincident with the process of individuation; that is, it grows through an expansive movement from the "skin-encapsulated ego" to the experience of a larger connected self. In each sexual crisis resides a moment of spiritual opportunity. The process is often remedial, understood long after it has been negotiated as raw experience.

Students compose their spiritual identity by reading backwards through their relational and sexual journeys. The spiritual journey, ironically, is marked by a recovery, not a diminishment, of feeling and sensuality, compassion and vulnerability. I find it useful to describe spirituality as the way the whole person (body and mind) responds to the presence of what is "really real" in the here and now. The category of whole person assumes an authenticity, a consonance between inner desire and outer expression; it also implies a movement toward activity in the larger world. The element of response suggests that the initiating call to spiritual growth comes from life itself, is a call to deep adventure, and is made in the context of personal freedom. The phrase "really real" (to borrow a phrase from Mircea Eliade) presumes at the center of the universe a loving Thou who is in relationship to every person. "In the here and now" affirms that the spiritual life is lived at every moment as a dimension of every act of human life. Its content is the ordinary, not the extraordinary experiences of a normal life. As has been said, don't wait for special conditions to "become" spiritual; if you cannot be so here and now, you cannot be so at all.

For a professor of theology, finding language that is not narrowly religious with which to describe spiritual states of desire for and union with a transcendent reality is one of the greatest challenges at this creative time in the history of our culture. Some clues come from the health care field, where guidelines for doing qualitative research have led to definitions such as Pamela Reed's on spirituality as the "propensity to make meaning through a sense of relatedness to dimensions that transcend the self in such a way that empowers and does not devalue the individual." Such relatedness may be experienced within oneself, in the context of others and the environment, and transpersonally—that is, in relation to the unseen, God, the sacred, or a power greater than self. Though it suggests no specific religious content, such a notion of spirituality expands the individual's boundaries inward, outward and upward. Spirituality, then, can be recognized; it is manifested through various patterns of connectedness, "in which one steps beyond the structures of everyday existence to endow the ordinary with extraordinary meaning." Once a group of seekers has a common vocabulary, the discussion can begin.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION PERSISTS

It is regularly assumed that this generation has been the beneficiary of a more open attitude toward sex talk. However, the young women in my course indicate that there is still awkward silence on the subject between many parents and children:

At the age of twelve I had a physical. When the nurse asked me if I had my period yet, I did not know what a period was. As my mother and I left the doctor's office and we exited through the waiting room I exclaimed, "Mom, what's a period?" My mother seemed extremely embarrassed by what seemed like an innocent question to me. She told me to be quiet about it and that we would discuss it at home. We didn't. My best friend and I discussed it at a sleepover. The last time I went home I asked my mother why we were not talked to about sex. She feels it is because she was never taught anything about sex as a child either. Because of my discomfoting experiences regarding sex and sexuality, I am not going to let sex be silenced for another generation. I am going to educate my children and let them know that their bodies and their sexuality are nothing to be ashamed or feel embarrassed about.

Young women are clear about the consequences of ignorance:

I can now reflect on what happened to me as a result of the sheltering behavior of my parents. If I would have

known at the age of 13 what a blow job was, I would not have had to be shown by a 15-year-old boy. I did not want to be the only girl in my school who did not know again, so instead, I made sure I knew what everything was, so I would be the most informed and the most knowledgeable. One day I had to tell them I was a pregnant 16-year-old.

Another woman wrote, "My mother and I never spoke of sex, in fact the only time she did speak of sex was when she was driving me to college and she told me to watch out for those boys, cause there is only one thing they want. But that was all she said."

The narrative has not changed much in fifteen years of teaching and reading personal essays with titles like "How I Learned About Good and Evil."

Sex, love and relationships between boys and girls were not discussed in my family of origin. When I was twelve my mother handed me a booklet explaining menstruation. She told me to read it and then walked away. I remember the confusion I felt as I held this paper, obviously of some significance, in my hand. Months later when my period began, I did not tell my mom and she did not comment on the bloody stains on my underwear. Somehow I knew I had experienced something forbidden and very private.

Over and over the stories are told—not reflections of an enlightened time, but accounts of sexual ignorance and fear and its power to hang on. The research says that parents believe they talk to their children about sex, yet their grown children claim that there were no such conversations. The young women I know do not blame their parents, who mostly were filled with love and concern for their "angel" children. The combination of innocence and knowledge of sex was too difficult for most to negotiate. The stories are tragic, despite the good will all around—stories of hearts filled with love yet bound tightly in sexual shame passed from generation to generation.

SEX AND SPIRITUALITY LINKED

The possible connection between sexuality and spiritual growth is a new, strange, and sometimes weird idea to these young women:

I never thought my sexuality was an integral part of my spirituality. I viewed sex as similar to exercise—only easier to perform and providing a lot more pleasure. But as I began listening and reading, my perceptions began to expand. Particularly intriguing to me was the concept of Eros as the drive in all living things towards union with the divine. When I reflected on this idea, I began to see examples of erotic activity in my life. The integration of sexuality and spirituality started to make sense. It is

difficult to articulate, but when I am involved in the plant research I love, there is a part of me that feels a connection with something divine. The connection goes beyond the intellectual—there is a physical manifestation to it also. Because I am doing something I love, I feel a harmony between *all* of me. My body and my spirit feel aligned and it feels like the force behind it all is God.

This statement exemplifies the union and integration people feel when they submit to ecstatic experience. Living life as a call produces joy and a sense of intimacy; it leads to lifestyle choices that preserve balance and are characterized by prudent decisions made in commitment to one's long-term best interests rather than to law or in fear. The author's insight, as well as her ability to articulate the many potentially erotic activities in her life, enabled her to reflect more deeply on her relationship with her husband:

I had always felt that there was a divine force in our union but had always separated our sexual relationship into a category that was "just" physical. But now it is very apparent that when we are making love is the time we are the closest to the divine. When I am making love to my husband there is a point when it is no longer only the physical stimulation but I actually lose part of my body and the incredible rush of feeling is coming from my spirit. In fact, when we are together sexually, it is the closest we ever get to each other.

A 21-year-old nursing major wrote, "I will be working in community health clinics which offer services to those who are dealing with various sexual issues. My mind has been opened to discuss such issues without unnecessary reservations but with honesty and sincerity."

Awareness is a theme common to spirituality and to the task of sexual self-acceptance. It goes without saying that unless people are aware, they can neither heal nor change.

PSYCHOLOGICAL MATURITY IS KEY

There are others who have not yet left their prolonged adolescence—which will only end when they are no longer afraid to disappoint their parents.

I think the reason I never asked questions was because I thought that if I had my mother would think I had engaged in some type of sexual activity. I did not want my parents knowing that I was sexually involved because it was considered taboo. I did not want them looking down on me. Now that I am older and not living under my parents' roof I still do not tell my mom more than the bare minimum, because she is not yet able to handle all that information.

Gail Sheehy, writing about the twenty-something generation, observed that a dramatic shift in psychological maturity appears to occur in most young people toward the end of their twenties. That may have something to do with the awareness of "another zero" coming up. Before this shift, men and women often feel unable to make clear choices or cope with life's problems without some help from parents. After the shift, they feel confident enough in their own values to make their own choices, even if those options clash with a parent's wishes. There may be another, less economic explanation: it may simply take twenty years or so for the human being to become sufficiently reflective to be truly "free" in a spiritual sense—a centered person characterized by self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and the desire for self-transcendence.

It takes time and commitment, but many young women are willing to practice spiritual disciplines, when they discover them, that cultivate a centered identity and make for greater depth of self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-transcendence. "Practicing meditation," one woman wrote, "seems to provide me strength to continue another day, to experience a new morning. Each person needs that, I believe, in order to set things right in oneself. It takes discipline each time. But I can't stop, nor do I intend to, because to be able to feel what spirituality is about is worth continuing on."

PRESSURES ABOUND

Today's young women remember and regret succumbing to the sexual stereotypes imposed on girls:

Our reaction as girls [to the way boys looked at women] seemed to be to change our values and ourselves in order to get the emotional attention we craved. We formulated our standards and the way we walked, talked and acted, according to the sexy standards of society. But we were all a bunch of little girls trying to be women—without being able to handle all the things that come along with that. It was later on, however, that I reverted back to the visual and cinematic symbols of womanhood I had been given by society, and molded myself to what I was told was a real woman.

Young women are annoyed at the pressures from society to sexualize all relationships, to be heterosexual, to fear pleasure more than violence. One woman wrote, "People can't be friends; it all revolves around sex and gender." She was particularly rueful about the consequences of the commodification of sexuality in the media. A young woman's sexual radiance is such that it is easily stereotyped and objectified. As she attempts to define and redefine her own relationships to men and other women, as those of

this postfeminist generation must, she finds her options limited.

I feel that people need to rehearse different situations that involve sex just like they rehearse how to say no to drugs and how to escape their burning house. If young adults, especially young women, were equipped with the reality of situations involving sex they would be more prepared to face those situations. They need to be taught that they do have a choice. If someone wants to sleep with you, you can say no, it is an option.

For lesbian women the problem is especially acute. They know from experience that healthy acceptance of one's sexuality, as individual as a fingerprint, is a condition for its integration with one's center:

If you are not free in your sexual life to experience your relationship happily, then experiencing that relationship as something spiritual is so much closer to impossible. It takes so much more work to overcome the societal values that tell you that you are wrong in your loving. It takes so much more energy, faith, love, strength, and perseverance to continue, woman loving woman, working toward a spiritual life in your sexuality and in your relationship.

Because they must deal with this at least by their twenties, gay and lesbian students are showing others the way. There are two kinds of people, and the difference between them is not whether they are gay or straight. The radical difference in experience is between those who have integrated their sexuality into their lives and those who haven't—between those who have come into their own sexuality and those who act without attending to the need for consonance between their inner and outer lives.

Societal prejudices like heterosexism contribute to weakening the link between spirituality and sexuality in lesbian relationships, but they also contribute to a lowered sense of self for women in general. In a heterosexual, patriarchal world, loving yourself as a woman becomes in itself a feat. As Mary Hunt has written in the book *Sexuality and the Sacred* (edited by James Nelson and Sandra Longfellow), "loving other women, thus being free to love oneself, is good for every woman's health. This is nearly impossible under patriarchal, heterosexual influences." Lesbian women who followed their calling to integrate spirituality and sexuality have done it all against the odds. Dismantling heterosexism will give lesbians—and also heterosexual women—space in which they can be free to be who they are, to grow as they need to grow.

Young women are realistic about the costs of making choices in a time of breakdown of societal consensus.

The summer between junior and senior high I was raped. I repressed the experience for a long time. I did not even acknowledge that I was raped until at least a year after the initial experience. Being raped at such a young age taught me that sex could just be taken. I learned that sex can be a powerful tool that men will use to dominate women. I learned that saying “no” does not always mean anything to a man. I eventually sought counseling where we worked on the issue of my being raped and other family and personal issues. This was the beginning in my healing from sexual abuse and learning more positive attitudes about sexuality.

Whether one has been hurt by another or has made choices she knows to be hurtful, she needs to find meaning for living her life.

My determination has cost me a lot. The men I have left resent me for leaving them—don’t I love them enough? Today American popular culture feeds us the notion of the superwoman—the woman with the ritzy job, chic clothes, wonderful husband, jet-set lifestyle and perfect children whom she still has time to care for. Impossible. I know it is because I have had to give up a lot of my dream. I wonder sometimes if I could have been happy. But whenever I find myself wishing we could go back to the fifties I remember that so many women fought for the choice to live the life that I am living. If I have to go through a little heartache, so be it. I am free.

This young woman feels confident enough in her own values to make her own choices and competent enough in life skills to set her own course—even if that course clashes with a parent’s wishes, a beloved partner’s desire, or society’s precedents.

SELECTIVITY INCREASING

Young women are marrying later and more selectively and renegotiating their relationships more intentionally.

I’ve heard the adage, “you become one parent and marry the other.” How true that is. I became my father and married a man who has many of my mom’s dependency traits. Rather than he helping me to become autonomous and myself showing him how to be interdependent, we had switched roles. So, to recognize and reject my mother’s dependency meant disdaining my husband’s also. This is a constant source of friction in our relationship, a thorn often pressing into the flesh and spirit of one or both of us.

Their very selectivity makes for the deferring of dreams. “I have a meaning in my life,” one woman wrote. “I have purpose. However, I do not have complete meaning in my life. I have not loved, un-

As long as religious organizations try to repress sex education, the young people who need the most guidance will get their information from sources that breed harm instead of health

conditionally, a sexual partner in my lifetime. Only at that point will I feel union.”

One can predict that there will have to be some midlife resetting of goals and redefining of “union.” Nevertheless, to desire and await such a completely fulfilling union must be part of the sacramentality of marriage.

CHURCHES AVOID SEXUALITY

Today’s young women are critical—in a detached way—of religious organizations and traditional practices. As long as religious organizations ignore human sexuality beyond the reproductive scope, and as long as they try to repress sex education, the young people who need the most guidance are going to get their information from sources that breed harm instead of health. Many young people have become uninterested in the churches that deem them ignorant of their concerns.

Since I was three years old, masturbation has been a part of my life. I distinctly remember going to youth group at church when I was in 7th grade and the youth minister saying at a sexuality retreat how two teenagers had masturbated each other and that it was “yuck.” No matter what anyone said, I never thought of it as “evil” until my sophomore year of college when I read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. I then honestly went through a pe-

riod when I felt evil for doing it and then even dropped it all together for a while. Shortly after, I started questioning everything of the Catholic/Christian tradition. When I have children, I am going to do a lot of things differently.

Another woman wrote, "Many people, especially women, fight old beliefs and teachings on sex and in return feel guilty." If these beliefs and teachings are worth holding, they have not heard a plausible reason why.

As Thomas J. Reese writes (*America*, 6/21/97), "in the Catholic church the battle about sex is over and no one has won. On questions of birth control, masturbation, premarital sex, divorce and remarriage, the hierarchy has lost most of the faithful." These young women are like the rest of the laity—muddling through making up their own minds without much help. The best thing the leadership of church communities could do at this time would be to engage people who are living their lives with good will and realism in some important listening sessions about the signs of grace and the signs of evil in the experience of sexual and marital relationships. "Don't ask, don't tell" is a rule that fails to promote personal growth as consistently in religious communities as it does in families.

FIGHTING DEGRADATION

This generation is in painful transition regarding cultural as well as religious traditions. A student from Africa wrote about female genital mutilation as practiced by her people:

The Sabiny people of Uganda have been successfully fighting against female cutting for the past several years. It seems they have been able this year to completely abandon the tradition in favor of a symbolic ritual declaring her a woman without maiming her for life. This was achieved when the elders of the tribe were educated on the harmful effects of the practice, and then were able to educate the rest of the people. A variation on the rite of passage is now being used in Kenya—called the "circumcision through words." In this ceremony all the ritual of instruction and celebration exists, but the cutting is left out.

Young women are angry about pornography, and they do take it personally. Why cannot pornography, with its humiliation and degradation of women's bodies, be contained? One woman's answer: "A society that is permissive toward pornography can do nothing about it when pornographic images become mainstream culture." Another wrote, "A quiet current streams beneath every corner of society: women are

hated." The solution to the problem is hard to come by, but even the most liberal of students believe it to be connected to better education. As one put it, "What we need is erotic education, with healthy sexual/relational images. We cannot censor in a free, capitalist society, but we can educate instead of closing our eyes."

A surprising number of these students have friends who have been exotic dancers or models or have profited in some way from the voyeurism of the American entertainment industry. They are perplexed and fascinated by this, even as they are unwilling to judge others' motives:

I would be interested to see a study done of women in the sex industry on whether or not they would continue doing what they do if they were paid minimum wage. I used to believe that women were in control of themselves and if a woman chose to dance for men, it was actually she who was in control of the men, with her body, not them in control of her. I have a different view of it now as a result of recognizing I am on a spiritual journey.

Another student wrote, "What bothers me most about the porn and sex industry in our society is that the intimacy that is especially needed today is being replaced by emotional detachment and voyeurism. We should be bringing people together to touch each other's spirits. Pornography separates us from our spirits."

The eroticization of violence has been a defining characteristic of male love-maps. This has been shown by James Prescott, John Money, James Maddock, and others. If it is true that violence is the regurgitation of pain, Western culture has some profound rethinking to do about the relative values of pleasure and pain and which is the greater to be feared. "I believe that so long as we blind ourselves to pornography," one student wrote, "all women and society as a whole will continue to be hurt. After seeing the film (*Not A Love Story*, Canada Film Board, 1986) I realized how unaffected I *thought* I was and how affected I really *am*."

A point of tension, of course, is the connection as well as the distance between what is pornographic and what is truly erotic:

The feminist critique reveals that what was erotic art in the past is actually not erotic now. Erotic, then, was the pleasuring of the male master. The woman or girl who could please her master the most could be considered the most erotic. Today erotic takes on a whole new meaning; it is a sharing between two equal individuals. Much ancient erotica should be considered pornography today.

The search for the truly erotic, that which connects and unites rather than diminishes and isolates, is the deep adventure of daily life. Where is Eros? Where is the call to union?

INTEREST IN SPIRITUALITY

Young women are generous in acknowledging, affirming, and celebrating a spiritual eroticism in their daily lives. "After a lot of work," wrote one student, "I came up with a mission statement for my life: to embrace, express and educate in spiritual truth. So . . . I will take my mission statement and my education and I will grow, celebrate, fight, and educate."

An intuitive value for the sacredness of sexuality led one 28-year-old woman to make, with her fiancé, a vow of chastity until marriage. In explaining this to the class, she described many sexual encounters in her late teens, which became increasingly meaningless until she reached a point at which she experienced no sexual desire whatever. When she met the man she thought she might want to marry, she discussed her insight with him, and together they made and have kept their vow. They will be married soon, and she looks forward without shame or secrecy to their first experience of intercourse as a couple. This example shows the mature values that should characterize sexual integrity: concern with stewardship of desire and the moral strength to make a choice freely to love. Where self-control and asceticism come into play, they are the servants of freedom and love; ultimately, they are employed freely because they are recognized as being in one's long-term best interest. Here may be reason better than taboo and law for waiting: "I left behind a selfish and frightened person and found a much more giving and serene person."

It feels different to touch someone's body and to touch even your own if you have always been afraid to do so. I feel it is a healing for all that are involved. Once you have taken that step, then nothing is impossible. This I know because I have been there, and I'm not afraid to go there again. My hope is that one day someone will be there for me with the lotions, the oils, the prayers if I should ever need them, and not be afraid to touch my body in order to give me comfort and peace.

The process of integrating sexuality with spirit is not a women's issue; it belongs to humanity. Women wish men were more helpful.

When I was sixteen, when I began to be sexually active, it was not hard for me to show my boyfriend my body because I was a very expressive person and basically I had

a body that was in great shape. I don't have that free expressive feeling any more and it upsets me and I suspect it upsets my boyfriend. It is difficult for me to let my boyfriend realize I am the one who does not want to see my own body. I wish a man could help a woman feel the enjoyment they know in looking at even an imperfect body.

Indeed, human sexuality is a kind of call—a dynamic that is intrinsic to the person yet leads her to reach out in the most radical way. As James Hillman observes in *The Soul's Code*, this call is a prime fact of human existence. The students I have known become witnesses to the possibility that sexual experience can be religious experience. They want to align their life with the call to spiritual growth, and they can see that no accident or heartache is able finally to derail that growth toward wholeness. One wrote, "When I write reflections through which I strive to integrate spirituality and sexuality, this is a time when I feel most intellectually alive. My writings have been avenues for me to have conversations with God and others. I believe that it is essential that I respond to this call." Another summed it up with these words: "Since it is my goal to live my life as completely as I can, I need to find the integration of my physical and spiritual self."

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Functionalism Undermining Priesthood

Reverend William P. Sheridan, M.Div.

Functionalism pervades our culture. There is a tendency to measure things, ideas, and even people by what they do or what they produce. Our culture values usefulness over essence and the bottom line over the human person. These values have found their way into almost every facet of modern life. The fields of education, medicine, and technology grapple with functionalism every day. The church too struggles with functionalism as it tries to place mission above money and ministry above technical efficiency. The priesthood is particularly susceptible to functionalism. Three areas of priestly life meet the functionalist challenge in a profound way: priestly formation, priestly ministry, and priestly celibacy. This article discusses the challenge and offers suggestions for achieving a healthy balance.

PRIESTLY DEVELOPMENT

Many important decisions confront people in the course of their lifetimes. A few of the major decisions involve work, one's state in life (marriage/religious life/single life), and religious involvement. These decisions and choices can strike at the center of a person's self-identity and self-understanding. What career will I choose? Should I marry? What will be the level and depth of my religious commitment? These questions, among others, define an individual to a large extent. In a man's choice of priesthood, all three questions intertwine. Although priesthood is not a career, it certainly guides one's life work. Committing to priesthood means making a celibate commitment. And religion, of course, is at the center of priestly identity. Most people can make a change in one area of life that will not radically alter the other areas, but not a priest. Human development and spiritual growth are crucial to priesthood for this reason.

A priest wants to be competent and even professional in the best sense of that term. Priesthood truly is a life's choice, encompassing significant aspects of a man's life; therefore, the priest wants to be certain that he is developing as a human being and as a spiritual person. Human development in his ministry and spiritual wholesomeness will lead to happiness and fulfillment. This is why emotional, psychological, physical, moral, and spiritual balance are elements necessary to a priest's view of his commitment. A priesthood based solely on what one does cannot truly satisfy a man as a human being. A priesthood that is not generously involved with tasks, jobs, and responsibilities, however, is a barren one. Balance, I would maintain, is the key concept here. Certainly there is a great need for competent and proficient priests in our church today. The people of God deserve a priesthood that is well educated, skillful, and professional, but they also need men of solid emotional and spiritual development. The mediating figure in all this is, of course, Jesus Christ. It's through his relationship to Jesus that a priest will be sent on mission and given the tasks of preaching, teaching, celebrating the sacraments, and building the Kingdom. It is also in Jesus that a priest will receive the love, presence, and personal reassurance that bring true human fulfillment. Balance is required in the various aspects of priestly life.

FORMATION AND FUNCTIONALISM

The formation of future priests needs to take this balance seriously. Seminarians in formation need to know that priesthood requires skill, competence, hard work, and discipline. There are tasks to perform and responsibilities to assume. But before one is sent on mission, he must first develop his relationship with Jesus Christ. If one examines the classic call narra-

tives from scripture—those of Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, the twelve apostles, and Saint Paul—one sees this pattern emerge; God first establishes a relationship with someone before they are sent to proclaim the word. God is first Abraham’s friend, *then* asks him to leave his native land. God quells Moses’ fears and answers his questions, *then* sends him to Pharaoh. Jeremiah’s complaint that he is too young for God’s work is answered; *then* he is sent to prophesy. Isaiah’s lips are purified; *then* he is sent to proclaim. The twelve gather around Jesus, travel with him, learn from him, eat with him, stay with him; *then* they are sent on mission. Paul encounters the risen Christ on the road to Damascus; *then* he is sent to preach to the Gentiles. Relationship precedes mission; it is not the other way around. It is not, for example, because they proclaim, teach, and preach that the great biblical figures are able to establish a relationship with God. God takes the initiative first in calling these people to a relationship with himself; *then*, through that relationship, they discover their task or mission. Priesthood and formation for ministry should follow the same scriptural pattern.

It is not because a priest performs sacred duties that he is able to form a relationship with Christ; rather, it is because of his relationship with Christ that a priest is given sacred duties, tasks, and ministry. To see this pattern in reverse is to fall into functionalism. This can be a difficult truth to impart to those studying for priesthood. If they are spirited men, they will have a degree of impatience with formation—natural enough, as they are eager to enter the Lord’s vineyard and “get down to business.” This eagerness must be tempered and channeled. To throw himself into the demands of ministry without adequate formation and preparation hurls the prospective priest directly into the jaws of functionalism.

Most seminarians do not have a problem with the part of priestly formation that asks them to learn how to pray and to engage in pastoral field education experiences, because the logic of those requests is rather obvious. Theological or academic training, however, is a different matter entirely. Because it is an academic exercise, theology is more likely to be viewed functionally than are prayer and field education. Theology, as an academic discipline, falls prey to functionalism rather easily if one is not careful.

It is not at all uncommon to hear seminarians gauge or measure theological courses and concepts by their “usefulness” to parish ministry. I remember members of my own class complaining most about courses on the Trinity, Revelation, and the more subtle concepts of Christology. “What difference does it make how many spirations and generations there are in the Trinity?” “Who needs to know all this heavy

stuff in Revelation?” “Too many obtuse German philosophers to study, if you ask me.” “How am I going to use all this in the parish?” “Who cares today about all these Christological heresies?” Such statements are pure functionalism.

Certainly, preparation for the priesthood wants to give seminarians relevant data and helpful concepts for ministry—but it also wants to form them. If we as priests and those in preparation for priesthood see or measure theology solely by its usefulness, we do ourselves a disservice and the people we are sent to serve a grave disservice as well. Admittedly, some of the finer points of theology may not easily be translated into a homily, catechetical lesson, or pastoral conversation, but these finer points of theology will help form us. We may not use the actual language of trinitarian spirations and generations in a ministerial visit to an elderly patient in the hospital. Having insights into the inner workings of the Trinity and God’s self-emptying love, however, will most definitely affect the concepts we use in speaking about God—not to mention that it adds to our knowledge of God and enhances our relationship with God.

A purely functional approach to theology cripples the priest’s ability to appreciate the poetic, life-giving, and passionate reality that is God. And if we are not preaching the more poetic, life-giving and passionate realities, we are in trouble. We can drone on all we want about community, spirituality, faith, and the virtues, but if this talk is not enlivened by insights and witnessing to the Living Presence, then we are just tossing out statements that never make it to anyone’s ears, much less to their hearts. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops’ *Program of Priestly Formation* speaks about this dynamic:

A priest is ordained to serve as a teacher representing the person of Christ, head and pastor of the church. Proclaiming and teaching the Word of God are fundamental priestly activities . . . Consequently, academic studies represent a critical component in the pastoral preparation of candidates for priestly ministry. As seminarians study divine revelation in the light of faith and under the guidance of the church’s magisterium, they should grow personally into ever more committed disciples by virtue of what they learn. Only in this way will they be able to proclaim, expound and guard the faith persuasively for the welfare of the faithful.

The study of divine revelation, then, does not (or at least should not) lead to a “head trip”; it results in an “ever more committed” disciple.

In another section, the *Program of Priestly Formation* ties theology and its study into an overall connection with prayer and the individual’s personal relationship with Jesus Christ:

Every seminary must provide a milieu . . . in which seminarians are encouraged to grow continuously and progressively in their personal relationship with Christ and in their commitment to the church and their vocation. A well-rounded and effective program of spiritual formation presumes and builds upon continuing theological and personal growth and character development consistent with a priestly vocation.

Good theology and the ability to theologize (or think theologically) are crucial to good ministry because they are the building blocks and mortar of a good personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In a 1997 interview, *U.S. Catholic* asked Father Robert Barron, who teaches systematic theology at Mundelein Seminary in Illinois, what would attract young men to serve as priests. His response:

Today we call the priest the “presider at liturgy” or “president of the assembly.” Give me a break, it sounds like a Boy Scout leader. . . . Teilhard de Chardin said the priest calls down fire on the earth. Now we’re talking! If you’re a young 18-year-old, why do you want to be the president of the assembly? When I was in the seminary, they used to say the priest was the “organizer of ministries.” Sure, that’s a part of priesthood. But who is going to be lit on fire by a term like that?

I would add that these titles are merely functional descriptions that define the priesthood by what the priest does, not who he is.

MINISTRY AND FUNCTIONALISM

In a 1996 *Origins* article entitled “Approaches to Spirituality,” Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk maintains that the priest’s identity needs to be less functional and more sacramental:

Catholic sacramental theology teaches us that being a priest is not simply a task that we have assumed, a function or responsibility like being a parent or teacher. Priesthood is a sacramental reality that makes us different from other members of the church, not automatically better but certainly different. When we speak of the sacramental character of holy orders, we mean that from the time of our ordination, indeed throughout eternity, we are re-formed into the person of Christ as head of the Church. This is the most central and most important feature of our lives after our basic configuration to Christ in baptism and confirmation.

In a 1995 essay, also in *Origins*—“Priests: Religious Leaders, Doctors of the Soul”—Cardinal Joseph Bernardin notes:

The priest is not primarily someone who works, preaches, ministers, counsels. Rather, he is someone who, at the core of his being, has been set on fire by God and who invites others to catch the flame.

The priest’s identity is closely tied to Jesus Christ, who sets hearts ablaze. Sara Butler, another systematic theologian from Mundelein Seminary, discusses the notion *in persona Christi* when describing the sacramental identity of the priest. In her article “Priestly Identity: ‘Sacrament’ of Christ the Head” (*Worship*, July 1996), Butler writes:

The sacrament of order refers the priest directly to Christ, and participation in Christ’s priestly office embraces the three munera (teaching, leading, and sanctifying). The sense of the “relatio” is that although the priest acts *in persona Christi* in a pre-eminent way in the Eucharist, “he does so also to a lesser degree when he is preaching, administering the sacraments, and shepherding the community.” The Council connects eucharistic presidency and pastoral leadership on the grounds that in both the priest acts in the person of Christ.

Here Butler refutes Susan K. Wood, who maintains that the priest is a representative of the church first and of Christ second. Lawrence J. Welch, professor of systematic theology at Kenrick School of Theology in Saint Louis, Missouri, agrees with Butler that the priest fundamentally represents Christ, then the church, when acting *in persona Christi*. He writes that “the priority of the Christic representation takes nothing away from the ecclesial” (*Worship*, July 1996).

So a priest can also act *in persona ecclesiae*, but his primary identity is inextricably tied to Jesus Christ. If a priest’s ministry and identity are not directly connected to his relationship to Jesus Christ, he will quickly be viewed as a functionary. In an article entitled “Priesthood Is Not Just a Job” (*New Oxford Review*, Sept. 1995), Father Larry Silva states that “The priest not only performs the sacrament, he simultaneously *is* a sacrament—a living, visible and audible sign of Christ interacting with the church.” This is where the priest draws his strength—where he sees beyond what he does and experiences who he is. When linked to Christ as its inspiration and invigorating principle, priesthood is never boring or experienced as an endless series of repetitive functions and tasks. With the passing of each day, I become more convinced that priesthood itself is primarily relational and only secondarily functional.

In a delightful book entitled *I Have Called You Friends: Sacramental, Theological, and Existential Aspects of Priestly Fraternity*, Carlo Bertola writes:

The ontological-sacramental relationship . . . between Christ and the priest is operative at the most intimate level in the person of the minister. And, while completely respecting his personal freedom and integrity, it works in such a profound way that he may truly conform himself to Christ, experience the feelings of Christ, imitate his example, and make Christ’s priesthood efficacious and real

to the extent that the priest truly becomes an alter Christus who can say, with the Apostle Paul, "The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me."

Bertola describes a beautiful communion with Jesus, almost mystical in its ramifications. When people say, "He is a good priest," I think it is because they are seeing such intimate communion being lived out in the priest's life. When I think of the priests who have most influenced my life, I can truly say they influenced me profoundly because I saw Christ in them. Many committed laypeople have also mirrored Christ for me too, but I draw attention to the priests because I saw, in their ministry and in their life as priests, the intimate communion of which Bertola writes. Priesthood can never be reduced to mere function; it must always express this intimate communion with Christ.

The most meaningful moments of my priestly life have been occasions in which I was most aware of the presence of Christ Jesus in a particularly real way—occasions celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation with someone, when the healing became so tangible that I could have sworn I caught a glimpse of Christ present. At times I have just glanced across the sanctuary during a post-communion meditation and *known* he was there—at baptisms, for example, when I have poured water over a baby's head and recognized a link among all of us in the water of that font. One tragic time, I had to bless a twelve-year-old boy killed on his bicycle when crossing the street. The child's mother looked me in the eye and said, "Go ahead and tell me there's a loving God—go ahead!" When I did, she stared me in the face and, with tears in her eyes, cried, "O.K., I'll believe you because I see him in your eyes." Priesthood is never pure function; it is pure relationship to a God who consistently reaches out to us in love. God energizes us and enables us to minister in his name and in his person.

CELIBACY AND FUNCTIONALISM

Celibacy is one of the aspects of priestly life most prone to functionalism. In part, this is because not too many people have a clear understanding of priestly celibacy. Unfortunately, celibacy is often viewed only as a reality that limits what the priest can do—a loss of freedom—instead of what it can, if lived properly, free him to be. These, however, can be difficult truths to grasp. For priests and seminarians, I have learned, nothing teaches better than lived reality. There came a point in my own seminary formation when I really sought to grapple with the celibate commitment and how to live it. I read a lot of books and periodicals that pointed to the roots of clerical celibacy, and most of them implied

that celibacy grew out of land disputes when priests and bishops were leaving church property to their sons as an inheritance. So the church made celibacy (which was then optional) mandatory. Some of the literature claimed that celibacy was nothing but a means of control, keeping priests dependent on their bishops. Much of the literature said that celibacy kept priests in an infantile state of reliance on others, putting them at the beck and call of their people in a dysfunctional pastoral relationship.

I remember being armed with this newfound information and marching into my reflection group on celibacy, determined to blow the lid off that group and the sham that was celibacy. I paraded my liberating data before the group and confronted the group with its revelations. And I remember our priest moderator clearly addressing the group by saying, "You know, Bill's right. Some of what he said was a bit polemical, but he's right. It's good to know some of you are reading. Yes, these elements of the tradition that Bill presented are correct—a bit overstated, perhaps, but essentially correct." The group fell silent.

"Finally," I remember thinking, "an honest man—no spiritualizing it away, no dodging the tough issues."

Then he said, "So what? What does this have to do with your discerning a promise of celibacy?" (Talk about having someone rain on your parade.)

"So what?!" I answered back.

"Yeah, so what!" he responded. "Are there historical conditions that may have influenced the church's insistence on celibacy? Yes. Are there side effects to this decision? Yes. Do you seriously think some pope woke up one day and said, 'By the way, let the fellas know they'll be celibate from now on?'" He went on to say that the church was a living organism, developing. That just as there were perceived negative results to a celibate commitment, there were positive ones too: availability and accessibility to our people. Not having to worry about uprooting entire families gave the bishop a certain freedom in addressing pastoral needs. Priestly celibacy also gave the church a degree of financial latitude in responding to pastoral needs.

In short, the priest moderator of that reflection group (with whom, oddly enough, I am stationed at Saint Andrew's College Seminary today) derailed my train and gave me food for thought. The practical considerations in celibacy could be balanced out; that was an eye-opener for me. He challenged us to discern whether we were called to make this sacrifice and to recognize the positive contribution it made to the church. The consequent understanding guided the next seven years of my life. My early days in parish ministry ratified the choice I had made. Celibacy did indeed make me more available and accessible to the people I served, and my self-donation had practical

benefits to the church as well as to myself. However, when I left parish ministry and went into vocations work, the bottom dropped out. Especially in the early days of my vocations assignment, this overly functional view of celibacy rocked my world. Before we started heading out on parish visitations and the schools program to encourage vocations, my daily routine was largely 9 to 5. Who needs availability and accessibility now? Young men were not beating down my door for appointments to discuss priesthood, so I was available and accessible for whom? I experienced the awful truth that availability and accessibility do not keep you warm on a Friday night. Then, once the parish visitations and schools program began, came the constant barrage of questions about celibacy. "Why celibacy?" became the great focus. Not only was I experiencing a reevaluation of my own celibate commitment, but no one I talked to seemed to see any value in it. "What a waste" was the favorite phrase others would use to describe what I gave my life to. The questions were painful and the answers harsh.

Once again, I began an intense exploration. I needed to "think outside the box." I needed to discuss this with other priests. I needed to read (unfortunately, most of the newer literature on celibacy was as negative as the data I had collected when I was in the seminary). I was in functionalism's cold embrace. Once I realized this, however, things began to change slowly—and continue to develop in this regard today. Through good spiritual direction and some rare but good reading—Gisbert Greshake, Carlo Bertola, Raniero Cantalamessa, Mary Anne Huddleston, Thomas Tyrrell, and some of A. W. Richard Sipe—I began to call my difficulty what it was: functionalism. Everything pointed to what I most feared, that place I had rejected as a means of understanding celibacy back in the seminary: spirituality.

In my mad dash to avoid spiritualizing celibacy away, I had come to realize that I had not spiritualized it enough. I had not turned to Jesus and asked his help. I had remained faithful, but I was hearing the sound of that swirling vortex, somewhere in the distance, that was leading to bitterness, cynicism, and all-encompassing emptiness. I needed to bring this to the Lord and beg him to help me.

Suddenly, celibacy was becoming relational. I saw it as part of my relationship to Christ, and I am continuing to grow in this awareness. Being celibate is how I relate to Jesus and how he relates to me; celibate is how Jesus sees me. I understood, in a certain sense, that when I elevated the host at mass and said "This is my body, which will be given up for you," I was being invited by the Lord to see if that was true in my own life. I began to see, with Aquinas, that celibacy was about vacuity, or establishing the empti-

ness within that is left vacant for God alone. I realized that the frightful loneliness and gnawing emptiness are there as my gift to him and to all I serve. I came to see that from my emptiness, others are fed.

I recognized that when I see a father and son on the beach playing catch and know, in a most disturbing way, that I will never have that experience, it puts me in solidarity with all the isolated and fearful people I encounter in ministry. I am like the prophet Elijah in that my celibacy is there to remind me that maybe I am looking for God in the thunder claps, lightning, and earthquakes of life (1 Kings 19:9–14). I am waiting for a fierce wind when maybe he is in the tiny whisper that speaks in the quiet of my vacuity, my emptiness, that place I have left only for him. And I am embraced by a love so deep and an understanding so complete that I am once again made whole. This, I am coming to realize, is what celibacy seeks to speak to me, if I can push past the functionalism and the myriad distractions and temptations that compete for my attention. I am weak, certainly, but I know that my strength lies not in what I do but in who he is: Jesus is Lord, Savior, and brother to us all.

The priesthood, as lived in our culture, needs to be aware of the dangers of functionalism if it is to continue being a dynamic presence in the church and in the world. Priestly formation, ministry, and celibacy have functional aspects and attributes, but they must never fall prey to functionalism, which presents a negative challenge to authentic priestly and human development. The liberating way out of the quagmire rests in establishing and maintaining a lifegiving and dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

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The Quest for Intimacy

Mary Anne Huddleston, I.H.M., Ph.D.

It is probably safe to assert that the quest for intimacy has never been more apparent and more desperate than it is today. With no embarrassment, women and men alike acknowledge their longing for soulmates; Thomas Moore's book by that title was on bestseller lists for months. Impelled by this longing, many join various and sometimes multiple groups, both therapeutic and social, and many consult therapists individually for years on end. But what is this intimacy that is our heart's desire?

When I taught developmental psychology, I came face to face with the topic; I had no problem talking about its importance and its placement in the developmental sequence. When, however, I anticipated my students' question, "What is intimacy?" I departed for the library to consult a number of sources. But not even the *Oxford English Dictionary* was helpful. Its offerings—"the condition of being intimate," "familiar intercourse," and "close familiarity"—were not enlightening. What I found under *intimate* (adjective) was hardly more so. In desperation, I went to work and came up with the following, offered not as an authoritative pronouncement but as a working concept: *Intimacy is the inexplicable rapport between two persons that enables each to reveal to the other his or her deep thoughts, emotions, drives, desires, and dreams that usually defy articulation.*

Long after teaching the developmental course, while reading a book recommended by a friend, I found two insights worth mentioning. In *The Dance of Intimacy*, Harriet Lerner writes, "Intimacy means that we can be who we are in a relationship and allow the other person to do the same. . . . [This means] that we can stay emotionally connected to the other party who thinks, feels, and believes differently than we do without needing to change, convince, or fix the other." Elsewhere in the book, Lerner gives a salutary reminder when she says that intense feelings and intimacy are not the same. In fact, she notes, "Intense feelings—no matter how positive . . . may block us from taking a careful objective look at the dance we are doing with significant people in our lives."

There are reams more to be written about the nature of intimacy, but this article is not a reflection on its meaning. Rather, it is an attempt to answer the question, "Why is the quest for intimacy never ending?" Although we may earnestly seek intimacy, there are three principal and possible reasons why our quest is endless.

WHY SEARCH NEVER ENDS

One reason is that, beguiled by the hedonism propagated by today's media, many seek intimacy only or

primarily through sex (i.e., genital intimacy). As noble and pleasurable as this intimacy can be, however, it cannot be the fulfillment of our quest. This is so because genital intimacy in itself involves only one dimension of the human being. If sex were as fulfilling as the media make it out to be, why the present all-time-high divorce rate, and why such desolation, sometimes unto suicide, among many who are promiscuous? Given the incidence of genital engagement today, were sex the fulfillment of our quest, the world would be a veritable paradise. But as tabloids and the nightly news testify, the world is less than idyllic. Even happily married couples learn early on that unless psychic intimacy accompanies the genital, the honeymoon is over before it is over, and the marriage is headed for disaster. "First make him your friend and then your husband" was the wise counsel of a house mother to amorous college girls.

A second reason that our quest for intimacy is unending is one on which I believe we seldom reflect—namely, the shadow side of our individual uniqueness. Psychologists, anthropologists, and theologians stress the wonder of our uniqueness. Indeed, it is a wonder. That it can be a drawback in relationships, however, they seldom remind us. If identical twins have subtle differences that cannot be transcended, and if any one person, twin or not, can barely know and understand himself or herself, how can anyone expect from another complete reciprocity in affection and communion? Such an expectation is surely the impossible dream. If we could only grasp this fact early in life, we would spare ourselves and others both disillusionment and anguish.

A third reason that our quest for intimacy is never ending is more profound than either our mistaken notion of what fulfills us or the shadow side of our uniqueness. Although I had some sense of this third reason, it was not until I read Sebastian Moore's *Inner Loneliness* that it crystallized for me. His insight is not easy to grasp, but once comprehended, it proves invaluable. What follows is a greatly simplified summary of the substance of Moore's rationale.

He first dwells upon self-awareness, calling it the trait that distinguishes us from other beings. In our self-awareness, he says, we experience "inner loneliness," an "ineluctable" (inevitable) human experience. Naturally, we long to dispel this loneliness. But, says Moore, the only one capable of doing that is "one who is the idea of me existing"—one whose image I am, one who is with me as no other being can be with me.

At the same time, this person must be one whom I can be totally *for*. Why? Because I long to be important to another, to give myself completely to another. But two questions arise; "Whom can I be for as the

person I am?" and "Who can receive me, know me as I feel myself?" This is a person, Moore asserts, who would need to have the following traits: the person must be someone whom I can experience as totally inward, knowing me from inside me as no one else can; the person must have no limits, for "it is another person's limitedness that makes him/her incapable of receiving me as I am"; and the person, therefore, must be other.

For the really honest believer, the only person who possesses these traits is God. In fine, to seek a human being who can be with us in the way Moore describes and, likewise, whom we can be totally *for*, is to engage in a quest that is unending. How well Augustine of Hippo understood this when he wrote, "You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (*Confessions* IV, ch. 4).

If, in retrospect, the three reasons presented seem to support the thesis that the quest for perfect human intimacy is unending, is the pursuit of it futile? Should we therefore abandon it? A yes to either question would be a spurious conclusion. Why? Because the desire for intimacy is ontological (i.e., in every part of our being), and life without it would be emptiness and angst. If, then, intimacy is a treasure that is its own reward, what can we do to foster its development?

PATHS TO INTIMACY

Being Open to Trial, Failure, and Retrial in the Pursuit. Let a given relationship develop naturally, testing from time to time the depth of the other person. This means revealing oneself in small ways and, by one's manner, inviting the other to do the same. One's intuition should indicate whether or not intimacy in the relationship is a possibility. One should not, however, be daunted by failure, for the next person one meets may be a soulmate.

Facing and Accepting the Inevitability of Loneliness. Loneliness is part of the human condition. Even lovers, loving spouses, and best friends experience it, for it is a consequence of our individual uniqueness.

Discovering Nonrepressive Ways of Redirecting Instinctual Energy. Such energy, especially libido, can be channeled into higher-level activities that ultimately are more satisfying. Aesthetic experiences and service to others (ministry) are effective for many, but each person must discern what is effective for himself or herself.

Disclosing Intimacy Struggles to a Tested Confidante, Professional, or Other. The attempt to artic-

ulate one's struggles is a release and often occasions wise counsel in return.

Cultivating Realistic Expectations Regarding Intimacy. As Caryll Houselander has written so well in one of her letters, "Do not ask from any human being that which God only can give. I grant you that God gives Himself through human beings, and unites Himself through relationships, . . . But no one friend can give God to you so perfectly as to satisfy and fill your need for His love."

Praying Earnestly for Intimacy. This means not only praying for authentic human intimacy, insofar as it is possible, but also praying for the deeper intimacy that alone can fulfill one's quest. Ask the Spirit to pray in us, "for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words, because the Spirit intercedes for the Saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26-27).

To say the least, intimacy is a challenging notion. Nonetheless, perhaps one unknown author has captured its quintessence in these words: "Two souls never meet except by way of a third. And it is always God." May we cherish the persons who make this third apparent.

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The Spiritual Experience of Tears

John P. Mossi, S.J., D.Min.

The Spiritual Journal of Saint Ignatius Loyola provides a unique glimpse into the mystical life of the founder of the Jesuits. The Journal comprises two copybooks. The first, consisting of fourteen folios, spans a forty-day period from February 2 to March 12, 1544. This text prayerfully assesses the type of fixed revenue, if any, needed to support Jesuit churches. The second records the spiritual experiences of Ignatius from March 13 to February 27 of the ensuing year, 1545. Throughout these copybooks, which together cover 386 days, the dominant special grace that Ignatius cites—over 970 times—is the gift of tears.

Such a privileged and all-encompassing divine-human communication can challenge our cultural biases and even our contemporary theological frameworks. Given the special nature of the gift of tears, how do we as pastoral ministers, spiritual directors, and counselors intelligently interpret this religious experience? In this article, the experience of the gift of tears in the Spiritual Journal is examined in its broader theological context. Also, pastoral caveats and guidelines are offered to help the reader better understand and interpret the gift of tears.

Ignatius's entry for March 4, 1544, is typical of the accounts of mystical experiences recorded in

these discernment logbooks. Tears are mentioned three times:

Finishing the Mass and unvesting, at the prayer at the altar, there was so much sobbing and such a downpour of tears, all ending in the love of the Most Holy Trinity, that I thought I did not want to rise for feeling so much love and so much spiritual sweetness.

Later, at various times, at the fire, with interior love for the Trinity and movements to tears, and later in the Burgos house, and in the streets until three in the afternoon, recalling the Most Holy Trinity with intense love, sometimes with movements to tears, and all these consolations ending in the Name and Essence of the Most Holy Trinity. I did not feel or see clearly distinct Persons, as I did on other occasions, as I said before.

The intensity of Ignatius's spiritual life, anchored by his ardent devotion to the Trinity, is striking. The extraordinary graces mentioned in the Journal can be overwhelming, if not questionable, for a first-time reader. Imagine if Ignatius were a professional colleague, a spiritual directee, or perhaps a friend. How would you react to this description of intense love of the Most Holy Trinity? What theological framework or methodological criteria would you use to engage Ignatius intelligently in conversation? How would you personally respond to Ignatius's

transparent disclosure of “downpour of tears,” “sobbing,” the interior affect of “spiritual sweetness,” and the reference of seeing “clearly [the] distinct Persons” of the Trinity? Would you be tempted to pathologize his experience or perhaps completely discount the content of the diary?

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNAL

The Spiritual Journal is the least known of the personal writings of Ignatius Loyola. The Spiritual Exercises, the constitutions of the Society of Jesus, collections of the saint’s nearly seven thousand letters, and his autobiography are his recognized texts. Throughout these writings, Ignatius demonstrates a care for precision and a judicious weighing of matters that continually seek the greater glory of God, expressed in apostolic service. However, the Spiritual Journal transparently reveals the mystical depths of Ignatius’s inmost person.

The Journal can more accurately be described as a decision-making record book. Compared to the Exercises, which are a series of meditations culminating in the mystical vision of the *Contemplatio ad Amorem*, the Journal actually reveals the unitive dynamics of Ignatius in conversation with the Trinity. Within this mystical context, the gift of tears functions as a critical signpost for Ignatius. The presence of the gift of tears, more than any other infused grace recorded in the diary, indicates that the mystic is responding to God’s invitations.

Other experiences noted in the Journal range from visions of the Trinity (sometimes as triune, sometimes as distinct persons) to visions of the Blessed Mother, as well as illuminations of intellect and understanding, affective movements of “intense love,” “intense feeling,” deep “consolations,” “surrender and reverential love,” “devotion,” and, finally, “*loquela*” (mystical experience manifested in speech). This abundance discloses mysticism as a complete way of life, not just a series of transient experiences or occasional visions. In the process, Ignatius is simultaneously illumined and further transformed.

An initial reading of the diary, without situating the text within the mature, spiritually advanced stages of Ignatius’s spiritual journey, could lead one to disparage its content. The Journal reveals what it means to be a mystic in the thick of action, seeking union with God throughout the day. The mysticism of the Journal is preeminently Trinitarian and Eucharistic. Why? The Trinity and the Mass are the theological filters Ignatius uses to assist in the decision-making process, confirming the particular

type of poverty that the churches of the newly established Society of Jesus should practice. In sometimes detailed and sometimes elliptical narrative, Ignatius records the quality and frequency of interior graces experienced prior to Mass, during it, and thereafter. With the Eucharist as the pivotal focus for the discernment process, the spiritual consolation of the gift of tears helps Ignatius to interpret the will of God. In many ways, the Journal decodes the mystical language of divine intervention.

The unusual frequency of the gift of tears as confirmation of God’s presence cannot be ignored. In fact, the first part of the Journal mentions tears 175 times, an average of four times a day. They were accompanied, on twenty-six occasions, with sobbing. On other occasions, tears interfered with Ignatius’s speech. Often, they were so intense and copious that he feared for his eyesight. The second part of the diary spans 346 days. Tears are mentioned in almost every entry—sometimes briefly, as “Tears at Mass” or just “Tears,” or sometimes “No tears.” As Joseph de Guibert comments in his significant work, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, “It seems to me that no other saint, man or woman, has in practice given to these tears a place equal with that of Ignatius.”

M. Clare Adams, in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, summarizes the theological significance of the gift of tears: “A complex psychophysiological phenomenon, tears expose the intimate, profound relationship of body, emotion, mind, and spirit in the individual human being and the social group. As a mode of communication, tears express to oneself and others feelings and levels of experience that escape or go beyond verbal expression.” Later, Adams concludes that “such tears are a gift and a deeply personal expression of the transforming action of God within the individual and the community.” Applying this *raison d’être* for the gift of tears, let us examine three entries from the Journal.

Wednesday, February 6, 1544

[Mass of] Our Lady

Wednesday [February 6].—Devotion before Mass and during it, not without tears, more inclined to perfect poverty. Later I thought with sufficient clearness, or change from the ordinary, that there would be some confusion in having a partial revenue, and a scandal in having a complete revenue, and an occasion for making little of the poverty which our Lord praises so highly.

This brief entry established the usual tripartite pattern of noting any graces prior to the liturgy,

during its celebration, and thereafter. Devotion before Mass, the celebration of Eucharist, and the presence of tears during Mass work together to move Ignatius towards a decision of "perfect poverty." This attention to the temporal duration of grace and its effects is indicative of the counsel given in rule five of the Discernment of Spirits for the second week of the Spiritual Exercises: "We must carefully observe the whole course of our thoughts. If the beginning and middle and end of the course of thoughts are wholly good and directed to what is entirely right, it is a sign that they are from the good angel." Throughout the Journal, Ignatius critiques not only his thoughts and their evolving movements but also all his actions, affectivity, and experiences—including special graces. For Ignatius, it would be highly dangerous if the mystical life were a blind activity unconsciously pursued.

In rule eight of the Discernment of Spirits for the second week, Ignatius cautions against impulsive decision making consequent to special graces:

But a spiritual person who has received such a consolation must consider it very attentively, and must cautiously distinguish the actual time of the consolation from the period which follows it. At such a time the soul is still fervent and favored with the grace and aftereffects of the consolation which has passed. In this second period the soul frequently forms various resolutions and plans which are not granted directly by God our Lord. They may come from our own reasoning on the relations of our concepts and on the consequences of our judgments, or they may come from the good or evil spirit. Hence, they must be carefully examined before they are given full approval and put into execution.

The key phrase in this rule is that resolutions and plans "must be carefully examined before they are given full approval and put into execution." On one plane, Ignatius faithfully logs these gifts of tears, their accompanying clarity of understanding, and the movement toward perfect poverty. On another, Ignatius stands as a detached observer pondering these religious experiences, carefully examining their source, manner of manifestation, and overall direction before they are approved and executed. Even though Ignatius experiences an overwhelming presence of tears, he avoids precipitous decision making. For example, before he reaches a conclusive decision on the type of revenue desirable for Jesuit churches, he repeatedly tests, for a period of forty days, the decision-making process.

Sunday, February 10, 1544

Sunday [February 10].—I went through the elections and made the offering of perfect poverty with great devotion and not without tears. Likewise earlier, in the customary prayer, before, during, and after Mass, with much devotion and many tears at the thought of perfect poverty. I was at peace when the offering was made, having understood very clearly when thinking about it, and later, certain feelings about my mediators accompanied by a certain vision.

At night, going over the elections between having complete or partial or no revenue, and making the oblation for perfect poverty, I felt a deep devotion, interior peace and quiet of soul, with a certain feeling of security that it was a good election.

While Mass enjoys the pivotal role in the discernment process, Ignatius's devotion associated with tears is noted. He continues to be led to a decision of perfect poverty. Aiding the mystic in discernment is not only his own astute awareness but also the insistent presence of devotion, sometimes described as "great," "much," and "deep." The role of affective knowledge, noted as "many tears at the thought of perfect poverty," "interior peace and quiet of soul," and "feelings about his mediators which accompanied a certain vision," reinforces the rightness of a "good election." The Journal pays careful attention to this collage of special graces, insights, affective movements, and the physico-psychospiritual experiences accompanying the gift of tears. Later, at night, Ignatius reviews the entire election process. There is no mention of tears. Instead, the prompting of deep devotion, interior peace, quiet of soul, and a feeling of security indicate that the election process is sound.

The next excerpt marks the first in a series of thirteen Masses in honor of the Trinity. In this lengthy text, it is critical to notice the subtle interactions recorded in the diary: the celebration of the Mass of the Most Holy Trinity, the illumination of intellect and other special graces, the prayer of Ignatius asking for a confirmation of absolute poverty, and four instances of the gift of tears. In the concluding paragraph, a theological reflection interprets the significance of these mystical experiences.

Tuesday, February 19, 1544

Last night I went to bed with the thought of examining what I would do in celebrating Mass or how. On awaking in the morning and beginning my examination of conscience and prayer, with a great and abundant flood of tears, I felt much devotion with many intellectual lights and spiritual remembrances of the Most Holy

Trinity, which quieted me and delighted me immensely, even to producing a pressure in my chest, because of the intense love I felt for the Most Holy Trinity. This gave me confidence, and I determined to say the Mass of the Most Holy Trinity, to see what I should do later. I had the same feelings while vesting, with lights of the Trinity. I got up and made a short meditation not without tears, and later much devotion and spiritual confidence to say successively six or more Masses of the Most Holy Trinity.

On the way to Mass and just before it, I was not without tears; an abundance of them during it, but very peacefully, with very many lights and spiritual memories concerning the Most Holy Trinity which served as a great illumination to my mind, so much so that I thought I could never learn so much by hard study, and later, as I examined the matter more closely, I felt and understood, I thought, more than if I had studied all my life.

I finished the Mass and spent a short time in vocal prayer: "Eternal Father, confirm me; Son, confirm me;" with a flood of tears spreading over my face and a growing determination to go on with their Masses (thinking of putting some limit to their number), with much heavy sobbing. I drew very near, and became assured in an increased love of His Divine Majesty.

In general, the intellectual lights of the Mass, and those preceding it, were with regard to choosing the proper orations of the Mass, when one speaks with God, with the Father or the Son, etc., or deals with the operations *ad extra* of the Divine Persons, or their processions more by feeling and seeing than by understanding. All these experiences corroborated what I had done and encouraged me to continue. Today, even as I walked through the city, with much joy of soul, I represented the Most Holy Trinity to myself, now when I met with three rational creatures, or three animals, or again, three other things, and so on.

In this entry, tears are mentioned five times. At this point in the diary, tears serve two functions. First, they are infused; God is their source. Second, within the recipient, tears function as a psychospiritual confirmation of the election process. For Ignatius, the gift of tears serves as a critical validation of the direction he is to take: "I drew very near [to God], and became assured in an increased love of His Divine Majesty." Through these collective graces, Ignatius is acutely aware that he proceeds beyond his normal powers and intellectual strength, "so much so that I thought I could never learn so much by hard study, and later, as I examined the matter more closely, I felt and understood, I thought, more than if I had studied all my life."

From a psychological perspective, Abraham Maslow's personality theory would be compatible with the goals of the Journal. Maslow, a humanistic

psychologist, articulates in two of his works—*Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* and *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*—a framework that appreciates ecstasy, bliss, and intense religious experiences as components of healthy individuals. According to Maslow, one of the characteristics of those who are engaged in the self-actualizing process is that they regularly report peak experiences. As highly motivated persons, "peakers" tend to be more mystical, poetic, and religious; they are more responsive to beauty and more likely to be innovators and discoverers. "Peakers" have transcended mundane concerns to a greater degree and may seem almost beatific to others.

In the final paragraph of his entry of February 19, 1544, Ignatius theologically reflects on the significance of peak experiences: "All these experiences corroborated what I had done and encouraged me to continue." So clear were the repercussions of this loving communication of God for Ignatius that throughout the rest of the day he saw the representation of the Trinity as he walked through the city. Ignatius was not just finding God in all things but actually seeing and intuiting God's Trinitarian presence.

Harvey Egan, in his work *Ignatius Loyola: The Mystic*, describes the extraordinary graces Ignatius received as "God's loving influx." The effect of these infused gifts transformed Ignatius into someone keenly attuned to a mysticism of service and discernment. Hence, as Egan observes, these mystical graces are not for their own sake and purpose; they point to altruistic ways to understand, judge, act, and serve.

By means of these mystical, psychosomatic experiences, God purifies, illumines, transforms, and reintegrates the entire body-person. These psychosomatic manifestations are the enfleshment of infused contemplation, sowing grace's incarnational dimension.

These extraordinary mystical experiences reveal God's intimate presence [by] using the language of the mystic's psychosomatic structure. If the scriptures are God's word in human words, genuine psychosomatic, mystical phenomena express God's self-communication, or infused contemplation, in psychosomatic language.

According to Egan, the "body-person" of the mystic becomes the conduit for a psychosomatic expression of God's infused love. The bodily and affective sensations of the mystic uniquely testify to God's communication, just as the scriptures embody the spirit of God. In this understanding, tears demonstrate a ministerial function. Ignatius sought them not as a form of lachrymose self-indulgence or as spiritual "gluttony," but rather for what they

revealed to him about God's will. In this sense, the gift of tears is a psychosomatic sign of a higher spiritual signature. Ignatius's Journal never cites tears as signs of personal fragility, such as an inability to cope with the tasks of the day, or of depression over lost relationships or failures. The Journal only associates tears with the movements of God's closeness, presence, touch, and infused graces.

If we did not have the Spiritual Journal, we would lack a critical insight into the mystical life of a truly remarkable individual who actively sought and found conscious union with God. The gift of tears, acting as spiritual coordinates, indicates the intensity of a way of life initiated by God's love. This love, in turn, radically transformed Ignatius for intimate union with God.

PASTORAL CONCERNS

While the gift of tears is seen as a grace reserved for a select few, it is situated within the ascetical tradition. Thus, the spiritual phenomenon of tears can challenge our current theological models concerning the perfunctory interaction of the human with the divine and the divine with the human. This article began by asking how religious professionals would respond to someone who experiences the gift of tears. I offer six pastoral concerns as suggestions to stimulate intelligent conversation focusing on tears and related religious experiences.

1. As spiritual directors, formators, and pastoral ministers, we have to ask ourselves how open we are to diverse mystical experiences. How respectfully and comfortably can we engage others on the topic of the gift of tears and other prayer experiences, whether extraordinary or less uncommon?
2. What specific model and method of theological reflection would we use to examine carefully and test a religious experience such as the gift of tears?
3. What psychological resources would we use to engage on deeper levels an analysis of the phenomenon of tears?
4. The Journal records an assertive, dialogical approach to prayer. Ignatius is confident that if we petition the Trinity for a specific grace, we will be

able to discern on several planes—spiritually, intellectually, affectively, bodily—the imprint of God. How open is our understanding of the experience of prayer and discernment to such communication of divine mystery?

5. What set of criteria would we use to determine the credibility of the gift of tears? How would this gift be distinguished from tears caused or induced by exclusively natural means, whether emotional, physical, or psychological?
6. How do culture and gender-based contexts assist or limit our understanding of tears?

The mystery of the human person is a minute mirror of the all-encompassing mystery that is God. A full anthropological portrait has to include those intimate, intense, passionate, and mystical God-centered experiences that step beyond the common attributes and capacities of the person. Jesus prays, in the seventeenth chapter of the gospel of John, for a transcendent unity among the disciples and the world with the Father. The Spiritual Journal is in many ways a remarkable chronicle of Ignatius's rewarding efforts to participate in such a divine rapport. He stands as a creative artist who holistically models a longing for the transcendent and for service to the world, always receptive to God's mysterious imprints, including the gift of tears.

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Leadership in This Age of Change

Mary Jo Moran, H.M., Ph.D.

As election time in U.S. religious congregations approaches, it is common to hear members converse about leadership and management as two very different matters. Reflecting their culture and a good deal of the management literature written in the United States over the past several years, these members continue to advance dualistic thinking—a residue from the former prevailing paradigm, in which the role of the manager and his or her functions are described in juxtaposition to those of the leader.

Warren Bennis, a prolific author in the area of leadership and management, clearly illustrates this tendency to polarize the functions of these two positions when he enumerates the following distinctions between them in his book *On Becoming a Leader*:

The manager administers; the leader innovates. The manager is a copy; the leader is an original. The manager focuses on systems and structures; the leader focuses on people. The manager has a short range view; the leader has a long range perspective. Managers ask how and when; leaders ask what and why. The manager has his eye always on the bottom line; the leader has his eye on the horizon. The manager imitates; the leader originates. The manager accepts the status quo;

the leader challenges it. The manager is the classic good soldier; the leader is his own person. The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing.

Certainly, these contrasts exhibit a brittleness in thinking that is the outcome of dualism: all issues are “either/or,” and the concept of an issue being “both/and” is unacceptable and unthinkable because it ultimately leads to paradox. While Bennis believes that the roles of manager and leader are both indispensable, he recognizes that the two differ dramatically. In addition, his comparisons suggest that managing is not only distinct from leading but may even be its antithesis, and that it is more constructive to lead than to manage. On the other hand, management consultant Peter Vaill, in *Managing as a Performing Art*, clearly captures a movement toward inclusivity and connectedness in his thinking on management and leadership when he chooses to speak of the “manager/leader.”

However, much to Bennis’s credit, he also believes—unlike many of his contemporaries—that the best leaders exhibit the attributes of both leaders and managers. These roles are not mutually exclusive, and the propensity toward dualistic thinking results not only in polarities and paradoxes but also in splitting—that is, severing the connections

Rather than experience polarities as threats to consistency and coherence, we need to see them as opportunities for both creative organizational development and organizational learning and renewal

between contradictory forces. Thus, conflict results, and discussion rarely, if ever, deals with the underlying dynamics.

CONNECTIONS AMID CONTRADICTIONS

As the world moves toward the twenty-first century, all of us—members as well as leaders—must practice and develop skill at making connections—that is, reframing opposing concepts so as to encompass both ends of a polarity. Otherwise, we will be most often unable to see the connection between the two ends of the spectrum and to explore and maintain the inherent contradictions and complexities so as to fully describe and embrace the concept or our experience. Our task must not be to eliminate complexity and contradictions but to manage the tension created by them with creativity and innovation. Thus, rather than experience polarities as threats to consistency and coherence, we need to see them as opportunities for both creative organizational development and organizational learning and renewal.

For us Americans, however, maintaining connections when confronted with paradox does not come easily or naturally. Our thinking processes resist holding two contradictory ideas at the same

time. Oriented toward action, we prioritize contradictory choices in order to do something and move forward. On the other hand, the thought of Easterners is focused on flow and change rather than action and stability. Thus, change is an expected part of the natural dynamic of life and living, of reality. For the Eastern mind, the extremes in either direction do not exist; there is always some combination of opposites, and there is always movement.

Clearly, our worldview, mental models, or paradigms act as filters for how we see and interpret reality. Obviously, today's leaders need to think globally; Western paradigms, mental models, and frameworks of thought are no longer sufficient to prevail in today's world. Their limitations can result in managers and leaders losing their ability to reframe concepts so as to encompass both ends of a spectrum. In addition, managers and leaders can experience great difficulty in seeing the connection between the two ends of the polarity, in exploring and maintaining the inherent contradictions, and in finding a way to enhance a group's movement. Here, systems thinking can help us, since it embraces paradox and complexity as well as chaos. It forces us to look at wholes rather than component parts. Paradox results when parts are severed from wholes.

EXPANSION OF THINKING ESSENTIAL

Expanding our dualistic thinking, which so controls our framing of both the world and our experience, is more critical than ever. Today, writers in the area of management and leadership consider one of leadership's most important tasks to be that of assisting people to change their mental models, paradigms, and worldviews by introducing new metaphors for the organization, its processes and structures, to help members see the connections between the polar opposites which they have split. Max De Pree, author of *Leadership Is an Art*, asserts that "the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality." Assisting members to perceive an empowering view of reality when it is most often experienced as a burden that must be endured, a dilemma that must be responded to, and a constraint that must be tolerated is a significant challenge for leadership—especially in the face of constant change.

On the other hand, utilizing a different frame, William Bergquist—author of *The Postmodern Organization: Mastering the Art of Irreversible Change*—describes postmodern leaders as "neither inherently great" (a leadership frame from the premodern era) "nor merely a product of a system or bureaucracy" (a leadership frame from the modern era).

Using the metaphor of the life cycle of a butterfly to illustrate the changes in the role of leadership and to describe the predecessors of the postmodern leader, Bergquist describes the premodern leader as the cocoon, the modern leader as the silkworm, and the postmodern leader as the butterfly. He believes the postmodern leader, like the butterfly,

knows that he or she has a limited time to live (or to be credible) and must constantly change directions with the wind. The butterfly is not protected in the cocoon (the premodern leader) nor does this leader do the mundane and safe managerial work of the silkworm (the modern leader). The butterfly is not always valued for its practicality, as is the silkworm, nor does it have the potential of the cocoon. The butterfly leader is a real person, rather than a mythic possibility. The butterfly leader must find purpose and value in subtle ways, for the moments of glory are at best brief and often not even acknowledged.

Today, leaders in religious congregations know they have a very brief window of opportunity in which to contribute their skills and talents to the life of the group. Leaders must be sources of integration. They achieve this integrative role through the creation and sustenance of community and through acting in the role of servant to those with whom they work. The notions of community and servanthood, in turn, lead us away from the traditional (both premodern and modern) notions of a congregation based on dominance to the notion of one based on partnership and collaboration.

Furthermore, Bergquist recognizes the importance of connection in this postmodern era, and he calls this connection “synthesis.” The concepts of both/and, synthesis, reframing, and so forth are some of the basic building blocks of the emerging paradigm. Globally, we are moving from a mechanistic worldview to a systemic worldview. Simplicity, parts, stability, order, predictability, reversibility, preservation of homeostasis, first-order change, and analysis are integral components of the mechanistic worldview. On the other hand, complexity, chaos, wholes, turbulence, irreversibility, second-order change, and synthesis underpin a systems view of the world. Many religious congregations are living balanced on the boundary between order and chaos.

CONCERNS IN RESTRUCTURING

Design—one of the skills that management experts identify as essential for leadership in today’s organizations—is concerned with synthesis and integration

by its very nature. It involves seeing how the parts fit together to perform as a whole. Many congregations today are considering restructuring, and a real restructuring, while illustrating how the whole system can work better, requires seeing the congregation as a system in which the parts are not only internally connected but also linked to their external environment.

As congregations move from a mechanical paradigm to a systems paradigm, leaders straddle both worlds and live on the boundary. Doing so requires integrity and courage—clarity about what a leader stands for and what he or she wants in life—because it is at the boundary, where the congregation conducts its business with the outside world, that maximum information exchange occurs. The boundary is also the place of maximum unpredictability and chaos, since it is the edge between two or more different systems and cultures. Therefore, it also requires the leader to be intimately involved in the culture of his or her organization and the changes that shifting paradigms necessitate. Utilizing a system’s worldview, the leader or manager is always a part of the system being acted upon. The leader as the agent of action is present and part of the model; he or she cannot be removed or isolated from that with which he or she works.

Peter Vaill maintains that

leadership is the articulation of new values and the energetic presentation of them to those whose actions are affected by them. As much as anything else, it is a teaching and coaching process in which the object is to help people embrace and experiment with values that they might not otherwise consider. ‘Management’ is the discovery of value conflicts and the invention of processes for working them through. Managers work for greater harmony among the elements that are already present in the situation. Leaders change the elements. Each kind of organizational action is indispensable to the other.

This indispensability results in the connection between opposites. Continuous learning and exposure to differences, as well as an ability to manage those differences, are essential.

Change creates instability and ambiguity and replaces order and predictability with disharmony and surprise. Often shattering reality, change produces loss, and loss creates wounds. Today, organizations are changing—not by choice but for survival where reality is momentary and evasive.

New perspectives seldom emerge when everyone operates from the same culture and employs the same metaphors and lenses. Having single congregational cultures made more sense in the past,

The complex and changing environments of the present—and, most likely, of the future—call for congregations to become more complex, diversified, and differentiated to survive

when the world was more stable and homogeneous than it is now. The complex and changing environments of the present—and, most likely, of the future—call for congregations to become more complex, diversified, and differentiated to survive. Thus, multiple organizational cultures can help congregations be more effective. A looming and novel task for leadership in the years ahead will be to foster and support a diversity of cultures within a congregation.

CHANGE PAINFUL BUT INEVITABLE

Since dealing with cultural change is extremely difficult and complex, and because it is on a path riddled with ambiguity and unknowns, it is often easier to dream of creating new congregations than to imagine how to change existing ones. However, the number of

opportunities to “give birth” or to begin to build a congregation’s structure from the ground up is insignificant in comparison with the number of congregations that must begin from where they are, with what they already have, to become what they desire. This does not negate the fact that some new congregations are born each year; however, their number is extremely small compared with the number of congregations that currently exist and need to change if they are to survive into the twenty-first century. The latter will encounter new questions with traditions created and cultivated under different conditions. The old ways will not be recast readily, unless they are undoubtedly ineffective for a majority of members.

Because our world is so intricately involved in change, which will undoubtedly increase, congregations will change—even if with much reluctance, uncertainty, and regret—in order to better meet the needs of both their members and the people they serve. Leaders today must help their members face the chaos, loss of meaning, and uncertainty about what is emerging long enough to ensure that it is birthed and given life in the congregation.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Bennis, W. *On Becoming a Leader*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1989.
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- DePree, M. *Leadership Is an Art*. New York, New York: Dell, 1989.
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Reflection Groups for Leaders

Fran Repka, R.S.M., Ed.D.

Leaders of religious congregations live in a time of unprecedented change. Multiple demands are made on their time by realities both inside and outside their congregations. Leaders know the toll of balancing a desire to sharpen the relevance of their congregational charisms regarding commitment to contemplation, harmony with the earth, multiculturalism, internationalism, and serving the poor on one hand, and the management of personnel needs and desires on the other. For most congregations, planning remains an ongoing challenge as they work with how their gifts and charisms intersect with the sobering realities of widening gaps between the rich and poor, worldwide poverty and violence, rampant materialism, and pervasive spiritual hunger, not to mention the suffering caused by homelessness, joblessness, and lack of medical attention.

How are leaders to withstand the pressure from these internal and external forces? How can leaders maintain balance in their personal and ministerial lives? Where and with whom will leaders process their feelings and challenges? It is helpful for leaders to come together across congregations for vitality and support. Clearly, leaders need each other to process their experiences as they safeguard the mission and purpose of their religious orders.

One effective way for leaders to share is through theological reflection on their experiences. When done well, theological reflection is a special kind of group process in which leaders strive to discover, in the light of faith, how God is moving in their everyday human experience. This reflective effort is best

accomplished in a “miniature church” of sorts, where participants come together to share God’s revelation by way of focusing on their experience, tradition, scripture, and culture. As the group moves to deeper inquiry, each individual’s theological praxis is revealed.

In the theological reflection process, participants discover their operative theology and come to recognize how this is congruent or not congruent with their preached theology. This faith context invites honesty and provides each member with an opportunity to give voice to the best and deepest within himself or herself. There are a variety of ways of doing theological reflection. Following is a brief outline of how one group at our center effectively works with theological reflection to support leadership and vision. The members of that group have worked together for over two years.

GROUP STRUCTURE

Leaders are invited to gather in groups of five to eight people. They meet monthly, with a longer break during the summer months. It is helpful, especially in the beginning stages, to have a group leader experienced in the process of theological reflection (TR). Ground rules of confidentiality and participation are established early in order to build group trust and the potential for the kind of vulnerability that leads to growth. Group cohesiveness quickly follows when trust and respect are in place. The entire process of TR is accomplished in a conversational style, opens with prayer, and

is embedded in prayer. Among many other benefits, prayer helps to solidify group identity. It also tends to support risk taking on the part of group members.

STEPS OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Preparation and Telling of the Story. As in any liberation theology, TR begins with shared experience—that is, the telling of the story. One member of the group, called the presenter, briefly describes an incident or event about which he or she has some feeling, question, or concern. A written description of the incident is often distributed to the group members as well; this tends to assist members who are visual learners and helps the presenter crystallize the issue. To protect the confidentiality of all involved, names are never used, and the written descriptions are destroyed after the TR session.

The stories vary from presenter to presenter. Some leaders may want assistance from the group (a) in developing a more effective, spiritually based leadership team, (b) in working with how to draw members into dialogue around community issues that matter, (c) in staying focused on the vision when competing demands are consistently made on their time, (d) in receiving assistance in working with resistance on the part of individuals and/or divergent groups, (e) in working with difficult personnel issues, and/or (f) in talking over decisions in process. Sometimes leaders bring to TR events or interactions that bring them great joy and that they desire to process further.

Listening. Group members listen intently to the presenter's story. They listen especially for feelings the presenter is expressing or not expressing. TR members then spend time getting any needed clarifications, reflecting their feelings, and sharing the attitudes, questions, or reactions they experience in listening to the presenter's story—all without interpretation or judgment. A nonjudgmental attitude helps the presenter to deepen her or his understanding of the experience and to take further risks in naming the thoughts, feelings, and wishes underlying it.

Clarification. The presenter responds to the listeners by adding any further information that may shed light on the dynamics of the story. For example, in one TR presentation, the group needed to know some historical information behind a longstanding personnel issue regarding a rather young sister who was not acquiring a job, had not had a job for years, and seemed perpetually to need sabbaticals. Leaders were genuinely concerned about that sister and her health and well-being. Group members were also concerned

about the thoughts and feelings the presenter brought to the issue, given that she herself was a very hard worker.

Surfacing Theological Concepts. After the group has had ample opportunity for adequate clarification of the feelings, concerns, and questions that arise, they attempt to surface theological concepts operative in the presented story. Concepts such as creation, compassion, revelation, unconditional love, reconciliation, forgiveness, Eucharist, community, hope, justice, mercy, and conversion frequently arise. Each group member shares whatever theological concept or scripture passage comes to mind regarding the presented story.

Focusing on One Theological Concept. From the list of possibilities, the group focuses on the one or two theological concepts they deem most salient to the issue presented (for example, in the TR session focusing on the relationship between the leader and the unemployed sister, the theological concept chosen for amplification was compassion). One by one, group members share a brief vignette about a personal experience reflecting the theological concept of compassion. Thus, drawing on concrete lived experience, the group members share what they internally experience when someone is or is not compassionate with them, as well as what happens in the community when they are compassionate rather than judgmental. These brief personal stories function as conduits for healing and wholeness. Drawing on the faith and wisdom of each other, group members quite naturally articulate their theology deeply rooted in God, their charism, and the gospel. In essence, group members share their operative theology. Their vignettes also have a way of indirectly affecting the presenter's original story by shedding light on other creative possibilities for interaction, resolution, and getting beyond impasses. Almost always, the presenter gains further insight into the story presented.

Assessing Impact of Tradition, Culture, Community. After the group members share their stories, the group returns to the story of the presenter. Leaders then call on each other to share how their worldview affects their behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. The group asks, for example:

- What in our religious tradition energizes, confronts, or confirms the theological concept (in our example, compassion) as it is found in the story presented?

- What would our church tradition have to say about compassion and joblessness?
- What would society or culture have to say about being compassionate with those who do not or cannot get a job? (A possible cultural message might be “If you don’t work, you don’t eat” or “If you’re not up to it, don’t do it.”)
- Where does our charism or community enter in?

The group recognizes and draws upon the potential of multiple perspectives of reality and their impact on process or outcome.

Examining Operative Theology. Further discussion proceeds around how each group member’s operative theology lines up with his or her public or preached theology (Are my actions in sync with my words? Do I say I am compassionate, but the unemployed sister feels she’s being criticized or judged? By what or whom am I influenced? Do I live the Eucharist and offer compassion and/or forgiveness as I say I do?). As group members move deeper into dialogue, they become more trusting. They are also less afraid to challenge themselves and each other to live the paschal mystery well.

Moving from Theologizing to Action. Finally, the presenter and other group members ask each other what new learnings they have gained and what feelings and thoughts they have about the outcome. Or perhaps they share what they desire to do differently. Often, members of the group feel affirmed by other group members, even in the midst of mistakes made in interactions and decision making.

Debriefing. At the end of a TR session, it is helpful for the group to debrief how any particular monthly session went. Sometimes, for example, group members will challenge each other to share more of their feelings or talk about why sharing certain feelings was difficult. We also do an evaluation at the end of each year. Members of last year’s group at our center gave permission for their comments to be shared (permission was requested after the evaluation session). Selected comments follow.

- “This was a new experience, and I valued getting to know people in this group on a deeper level than we can know each other, for example, at our LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) meetings.”
- “I like the idea of scripture being the base out of which we evolve this very relational reflection.”
- “It’s helpful to know that each of us has struggles in leadership—sometimes similar struggles, some-

times different ones . . . and I’m learning from both.”

- “After my [serious auto] accident, I felt such a support system here . . . and could feel the pain of what happened to me in a deeper way, and that was good.”
- “I’m appreciating the differences in our congregations and the various expectations of each as well.”
- “The comfort level is high; I know things will stay here . . . I can work on anything and it will be held sacred.”
- “I gained great insight from the group . . . for decision making . . . personnel issues . . . and working with groups . . . it’s shared wisdom. There was always variety too . . . and such respect and sensitivity.”
- “The problem I had adjusting to the team, doesn’t exist anymore . . . because of the group.”
- “There was always a special bondedness in the group . . . and I am having to grieve as I leave my office of leadership and leave this group as well.”

Some groups challenge themselves to new depths. For example, after working together for several sessions, group members in one group challenged each other to be more vulnerable about how they really felt about the organizational, administrative, and personnel aspects of their ministries, as well as to explore more deeply such feelings as their anger toward the church. They desired to focus more on themselves than on the critical incidents presented.

When done well, theological reflection assumes a central role in the personal and communal integration of a leader’s life and ministry. That is, the group makes connections with the soul of the congregation, the soul of the global church, and the soul of the world. By coordinating disparate pieces into a cohesive whole and having the courage to ask the necessary questions, the group is in a better position to bring the agenda of the congregation to life. In a nutshell, when leaders take time from their busy schedules to reflect, listen, and theologically challenge each other, they become more centered leaders.



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Providences

James Torrens, S.J.

Eye with a Cast

Well, on our first no-coat, no-jacket afternoon, man picked me out lamblike at the token booth, went for my wallet, handwrestling me, tore it out through my pantsleg. Hey the charge cards dropped free.

Botching a theatre address Sunday, I went running every whichway, implored directions (and of course drew blanks). Out-of-town friend beat me at a walk. The play over, main actress says, "I picked you out."

"Do you believe in guardian angels?" You bet. Eight of my nine lives they've conserved. What if my Hertz Tempo going flat today had done so on the BQE? It picks me up to think this.

"How come all this happens to you?" Just like Cabiria, that grin of trust, an easy pick for the street wolves. Soul-sister picking yourself up, what star did you twinkle from?

Tevye, chased from the Pale with the Chosen People, quips, "Can't you pick someone else?" Calamity, James, exasperates. Bite your tongue. That eye with a cast has picked you!

Recently, I visited Paris as part of a tour group from the San Francisco Bay area. Traveling from New York, I reached Charles de Gaulle Airport two hours before the others and waited at their exit gate. Who should emerge from the flight first, however, but an old and close high-school friend who had also been in the Jesuits for some years and then left. He had invited me to the celebration and blessing of his marriage the week before, but distance had prevented my attending. Now, suddenly, here they were, he and his wife, on a Parisian honeymoon. Call it coincidence? It struck the three of us as a providence.

Soon we were able to spend a day on the tourist trail in Paris. Descending from Montmartre toward the metro station, we passed a historical marker that my friend went across the street to read. He waved me over in excitement. "In a nearby chapel," it read, "Ignatius Loyola and his first companions, students at the University of Paris, pronounced their religious vows." The place where they did so—a kind of grotto with a bare stone altar—is ordinarily locked tight. This day, however, it stood open for a photo display about Teilhard de Chardin. We were invited into the hallowed space for a few minutes. Call it coincidence again, but we could only think providence.

Life is chock-full of such guiding moments. Pastoral ministry even depends on them. You go on a hospital visit to one person and end up very much welcomed by someone else close by. You come upon some reading that just suits a homily topic or responds to some crisis.

In an ordinary day as well, how much there is to wonder at—the paths that randomly cross, the adventures that bruise us, the delays that turn out to be salutary, the miscues that teach us, the accidents that

lay us low for a while, or the losses that fill us with grief (and that made Tevye, in *Fiddler on the Roof*, lament that God seemed to be picking on the Chosen People). How mysterious all of our lives appear in this light of a benign force daily composing them.

Not everyone perceives their misadventures and traumas in this way, as basically favorable. Belief guides us to this interpretation of what others would call random happenings or attribute to an evil star. It gives us eyes for what is before our noses. It helps us draw profit, for example, from the great weaknesses we discover in ourselves, our gaps in learning, our handicaps, and the family dysfunctions from which we suffer. How easy it is to fall to a habit of mourning or blaming all these negative factors—which, meanwhile, are clamoring for another sort of attention. All of us know the stutterer who has turned his or her handicap into a kind of eloquence, or disabled athletes who have switched their alert energy into productive arts or works.

So what if some episode of our life casts us as that imaginary figure from the American West, Calamity Jane? “For those who love God, everything works for the good” (Rom. 8:28). We all recognize by now that God does not stave off catastrophes or diminish barbarous cruelties. God does not suspend nature or reverse human freedom—not ordinarily or to our notice. But the Spirit of God and of Jesus Christ steers us through events of great moment and of small moment too, speaking to our own spirits, teaching us a godly response.

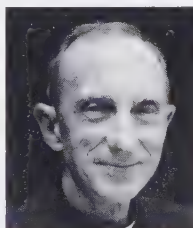
My poem mentions a number of incidents typical of my life and its mishaps, many of them self-caused (for example, by my proneness not to read all the directions). Something—and I really mean Someone—has kept steering me through. That may involve

much naiveté, like that of the title character in Fellini’s film *The Nights of Cabiria*. Cabiria should have recognized her predator but, after the damage he does, her jaunty hopefulness at least keeps her going.

We would go crazy trying to foresee or ward off all dangers. We recognize a lot of misjudgments only after we make them. I should not have parked, a while ago, at a site full of rubble—but at least the tire went flat close to home and not on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. I have come to regard my life as a tissue of such providences, little signs of a guiding hand. It sure eases the frustrations.

Many people younger or, especially, older come to fear change and determine to keep the tenor of their lives even. Reckless change, imprudent change, change just to relieve the boredom—we do not need any of that. But truthfully, who can sidestep change? And it is full of opportunity, of Divine invitation.

“Pilot me through change.” That needs to be our prayer. And the One who loves to be at work for our good asks nothing better than that prayer. We may think, at bad moments, that God is squinting at us, that there is some prejudicial spot in God’s eye. Not at all. Rather, at every moment, the great fisherman, to whom all waters are transparent, is casting for us, angling to draw us in.



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Invitational Vocation Promotion

Catherine M. Harmer, M.M.S., Ph.D.

Recently, I had a conversation with a vocation promoter from another congregation—one whose American province is growing smaller and older. The group has done a phenomenal job of empowering laity in their various ministries and especially in their institutional works. The future of the ministries is not in doubt because of the dedicated laity who are in place and who are diligently training their own next generation. This vocation promoter repeated something to me which I have been saying for years: “It is not a question of numbers!” She had recently attended a vocation meeting where the emphasis had been on numbers and the importance of increasing them. We talked instead about the historical realities. One of these is that religious life in most ages has been small in terms of numbers of congregations and numbers within each group. Religious communities have accomplished their ministries through the involvement of others, not through self-sufficiency.

The myth that many older religious still harbor is that very large communities exist that are able to staff many institutions, at least in the professional roles, totally with their own members. I attended a grammar school where there were twenty-five sisters and one lay teacher. Thus, the myth is of fairly recent birth and death. At certain points in history there

have been large growths in the membership of religious congregations. In *Vie et Mort des Ordres Religieux*, Raymond Hostie traced the increase and decrease of numbers, highlighting the blips on the screen of history. He noted that the sudden increases in numbers were related to serious social problems or major social changes. I would suggest that the blip in the twentieth century was related to two major wars and the Depression in the first half of this century. It paralleled a large increase in the numbers of religious during the first sixty years of the century.

By the early 1960s the numbers began to decline, owing partly to the changes in religious life following Vatican Council II—but I suspect it would have happened in any case. What was different during the late sixties and part of the seventies was not simply the numbers leaving but also the decline in the numbers entering. This was also a time of increasing involvement of the laity in many of the institutional works of the church and of religious communities. It is tempting to see this as a result of the decline in religious vocations. Rather, it was the result of greater education of the laity and of the many new movements for involving laity as more than dues-paying observers of church life and work.

When two such paths interconnect—the decline of religious and the increased involvement of laity—it

is hard not to see the hand of God at work. I have often asked religious, in schools and in hospitals especially, whether they would have opened the higher levels of administration to laity, had they had enough sisters to fill the slots. Many agree, reluctantly, that they would have been slower to open the door to lay involvement if they had enough sisters.

RELIGIOUS LIFE CHANGING

However, religious life is more than institutional involvement. It is more than an inexpensive work force. Some religious who are continuing to invite others to join them in the life may be concentrating on filling slots or carrying out their ministries on their own. Religious life, aside from the ministries but also in relation to them, has a reality that is distinct and true in itself. One essential aspect of religious life has been its prophetic nature—its openness to respond to new situations and to unmet needs, and to do it often in the face of the contradiction and disapproval of others.

Religious today are increasingly involved in new ministries—ones for which the laity at present are unprepared to enter, or blocked from entering by poor salaries. These new ministries, like schools and hospitals in the past, are often on the cutting edge of church and world interests—ranging from ministries to the homeless, to battered women, and to victims of AIDS and other diseases, to involvement in battles for social justice for all people everywhere. In the past, religious communities have pioneered new ministries or outreach to groups not previously served. Also, we know from history that religious, especially women, often have had to fight to do the service they felt they were called on to provide.

Whether religious communities in my lifetime will have large numbers, entrance groups in the double digits, is not the real issue. Religious life has a long history, going back to the apostolic age. It has been through numerous “near-death experiences,” has been outlawed in some countries, has grown small, and then has spread again. It exists at God’s will, not humanity’s.

A sister asked me once if I believed that religious life has a future. My answer: I believe it completely and unreservedly. What I do not believe is that it has much, if anything, to do with numbers or with median age. It has to do with people being willing to dedicate themselves to the work of God, to the people of God and their needs. A few years ago I visited a hospital in Pakistan, where I had worked. We had turned it over to the government and people of Pakistan. To say I did not have a nostalgic feeling of sadness would be untrue. However, I was exhilarated to

see what the people had done with the hospital, how it had grown and, with government support, developed programs and departments we had not been able to afford. Our foundress’ picture was still hanging in the lobby, as was a plaque bearing the names of all the sisters who had served at the hospital. Many of the people we had trained were still working there, and several took me on a tour, showing me with pride what had been done.

It may be that religious life will be smaller in the foreseeable future. The question, then, is how the smaller numbers will live and work for God and the people. We are meant to be the leaven, the yeast, not the flour. Any baker knows how small an amount of yeast is needed to make a lot of bread.

INVITATION TO OTHERS

The focus of my conversation with the vocation promoter was twofold. We were both saying yes to a future for religious life and our willingness to continue to invite women and men into that future. However, the second element we touched on is the main content of this article: our invitation to others and what we are saying about that to which we are inviting them.

I am often invited to meetings, and I ask about the agenda. When I am invited to a party, I usually ask about the focus of the party and how many people are coming. I do this because I don’t want to get to a meeting and discover that I am not interested in the content at all. Nor do I want to go to a party that is going to be a mob scene where no conversation is possible. What is most annoying to me is discovering, upon arrival at a meeting or a party, that it is quite different than I was led to believe.

If I seem selective about meetings and parties, I am even more selective about what I do with my life. Too often, when I look at vocation promotion literature, I find myself wondering if what is being presented is really true to what is being lived. Most religious communities over the past decades, since early renewal, have refocused their ministries, their lifestyle, their spiritual practices, and their approach to community. It is not my intent to focus on questionable statements; rather, I wish to emphasize the need to be clear about what we say in our invitation.

I worked with one of our European vocation promoters a number of years ago. In their literature, the congregation focused very much on community living, with its strengths and beauties. Their formation followed the same pattern, with a lot of group activity and group functioning, along with what I called “the warm cuddlies.” When I questioned the vocation

promoter, she talked about the great need in her country for a sense of community, about young people yearning for the warmth they no longer found in family, church, or professional life. Her literature was addressed to that need. Two things worried me. One was that we were attracting a number of needy, possibly emotionally dependent women. The other was that we were not presenting a picture that focused on our mission, ministry, and the challenges of religious life today. As we talked, I remembered when I first saw a brochure from our vocation department, when I was a high-school student. It spoke of women dedicated to the healing arts in the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. I was challenged, excited, and frankly a bit overwhelmed. The next day I wrote for information. There was nothing about warm, friendly communities; there was a lot about a demanding life of reaching out to others and doing it with other dedicated women.

CRAFTING THE INVITATION

In putting out our invitation to others to come join with us, I think it is essential that we convey the core of who we are and why we exist, in both general and specific ways. There are some risks involved. If our picture of ourselves does not attract others, we may need to look at who we are and what we are doing. It may be that our life is too demanding, which would tell me we need to contact women and men who want such a life. If our life is too comfortable, we may need to look at ourselves to see when we lost the challenging and demanding elements. I am not sure that a comfortable life would have been very attractive to me when I looked at that brochure. I was a bit frightened by the challenge but decided I wanted to try.

There are four areas in which I think we need to focus vocational promotion that is true, valid, challenging, and inviting. These areas are mission, identity, community, and spirituality.

MISSION

Often the emphasis of vocational literature is on the ministries in which we are involved. That is fine in a way, but we need to identify a focus within which those ministries take place. The mission is the broad reason behind who we are and what we do. For religious, this mission has to be a piece of the mission of Jesus Christ. The ministries are the ways we act, work, and struggle to achieve the goals of the mission. Too often we have switched the priority of these two realities. Going back for a moment to that vocation literature I found as a student: the cover fea-

tured a picture of a sister who was a doctor. The text said that Medical Mission Sisters worked as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and technicians, in hospitals and clinics in Africa, India, and other locations. That brochure identified the ministries of the group, which was fine with me because I was interested in both medicine and missions. However, inside there was a picture of the Good Samaritan, and something about how Jesus was concerned for the poor and the sick of the world. I am not sure that the woman who wrote that brochure was consciously separating mission and ministry, but she hit the two important things for me, because I was thinking a lot about a religious vocation, and fighting it, until I saw that description.

In the years after Vatican II, as many communities reevaluated their works as well as their way of life, a third element entered into our thoughts. We tried to be clear on our mission as part of the mission of Jesus (Luke 4:16–22), and we evaluated our ministries in terms of the mission. However, in addressing the ministry side of the question, we sometimes became caught up not in the ministry alone but also in the institutional base for that ministry. So Medical Mission Sisters would look at the healing Jesus and the ministries to the poor and the sick, but we, like many, also became caught up in questions concerning specific hospitals. It was not easy to go through that process. Like most communities, we had to be very clear that we were talking about mission and ministry, not the maintaining of our hold on particular institutions.

Our vocation literature was relatively easy to develop in the days when we could talk of hospitals in Ghana and India, clinics in the Philippines and in Vietnam. We are still in many of the same countries, but we find ourselves doing different ministries as a part of the healing presence of Jesus. Every community needs to be sure that the ministries in which they are involved do in fact support the mission. Just as important, we need to be sure that our vocation literature shows those particular ministries and what it means to serve in them. Home health visiting in Appalachia or in Southern Luzon has the same validity as running the hospitals of the past. Many of the new ministries are smaller and more localized, and some may be controversial. For sure, they may be less romantic than that of the sister doctor with her stethoscope around her neck, or of the sister surgeon in the operating room.

In vocation ads, I often find that on one hand there is a general sense that the community is “religious” without a clear depiction of the specific mission and ministries, and on the other hand there is an overemphasis on the work done. We need both—the religious commitment and life, and the

ministries to which we are committed—to be reflected in our literature and our conversations with those who show an interest in us.

IDENTITY

When we think of identity, we need to consider with whom and for whom we identify ourselves. And we need to do that without some of the symbols of the past, which in some ways carried an outward sign of the identity. When I was growing up, we could tell which communities did what because we saw their clothing. However, we also had some negative connections to those symbols. In my high school, we had five different communities of religious women teaching. Without ever saying that we were personally considering a religious vocation, a number of my friends and I compared these women not on the basis of their clothing and its style but on the basis of what that symbol meant for us as we thought of the group to which each belonged. This was a superficial but somewhat valid classifying by a group of teenagers. We thought of one group as proud and aloof. Another group had a reputation for favoring certain kinds of students. Two of the groups were known for being very “student-friendly.”

Identity via religious dress was something often argued about in religious communities during the early days of renewal and change. I remember sisters asking how people would know who we were if we changed our distinctive garb, or whether we would be respected without it. Perhaps a too-facile response on my part at that time was, “By their deeds you will know them.” Yet that is indeed how we will be known. During graduate school, I was one of four doctoral students who were given an opportunity to work for a faculty member with some master’s-level students in group process. Each of us had a group with which we met regularly through the semester. During one session, a Jewish woman student asked me if I was a nun. Rather than answering directly, I asked her why she thought that. Her response had to do with her seeing me as a concerned, fair, and caring person. She connected these qualities with Catholic sisters.

So our vocation literature can do much less with outward symbols and has to focus rather on our identity with the Jesus who walked the roads of Palestine, reaching out to the poor, the sick, and often to the despised. The most successful literature that I see makes the connection between identity and ministry. Somehow we have to convey the love of Christ for the people with whom and among whom we serve as the core of who we are. We need to put on the love of Christ in such a way that it is palpable. And our lit-

erature of vocation needs to make that as real as the sister doctor with her stethoscope was.

COMMUNITY

I believe that most of us would agree that community is a central value in religious life. However, it is lived today in many diverse ways, some of them not so visible as in the past. The grade school I attended had a large convent where twenty-five to thirty sisters lived. In addition to the teachers, the principal, and her assistant, there was also a mysterious Reverend Mother who did not work in the school but showed up for the Christmas pageant and the close of the school year. One night, while I was in high school, I was walking past the convent on the way to a friend’s house when I suddenly thought, “How great it must be to live with a group of people who share your values and your desires and who work for the same things.” What I think sparked that thought was my own searching for what life would be post-college and post-medical school, which were my personal goals at that time. I never even considered becoming one of them because they were teachers, but their life, little as I understood it, was an inspiration. However, the concept of community was very undeveloped in me, even as I began the process of entering the Medical Mission Sisters a few years later.

In many years of work as a consultant with religious, I have come across a variety of ways in which community is now being lived out: large groups at motherhouses, small local communities, very small groups, and people living alone. I have had to distinguish for myself the community from the group. In some cases what I see is group living—which may be pleasant or awful or many things in between, but which I do not call community. In other cases I see people living singly or in very small or very large groups, and I find community. What makes the difference is that in community there is a reality I call relational living. This is more than sharing a facility. It is being interested, concerned, and loving toward the others. It means that one’s life is impacted by the others—changed at times, enriched, challenged. A true community needs to be involved in discerning, challenging, supporting, and being accountable to one another. If it is true that people today are seeking community, then I hope that what they are reaching out for is more than simply group living and that it is different from a need for intimacy.

If we give a false notion of community, we may find ourselves attracting very needy, lonely, possibly even sick people who are looking for someone to take care of them or to make up for the holes in their lives. True

community requires strength, loving concern, and the willingness to be a challenge to one another. It is not for the fainthearted. When we write or speak of community in vocation work, it is that meaning that we have to convey. I had not the least idea of how those women in my parish convent lived or whether they liked one another or not. What I hoped was that there was a commitment to something important and a sharing in the effort to make it happen. That was what I wanted in terms of community, without ever knowing the word.

The other concept we need to infuse into our literature is the broader sense of the community of all people: the community of church, the community of the concerned, the community of those who need our care and concern, the poor, the socially deprived, prisoners, AIDS patients, and so many others who call out for the assistance of the community of believers.

PRAYER

Increasingly, it seems true that many people are looking to religious for help in the areas of prayer and spirituality. There are many retreat centers, often at former novitiates or colleges, where workshops, retreats, and conferences are held frequently on the topic of prayer. A number of religious communities have lay people who join them in their Sunday liturgies. Some of these people are fleeing from parishes that have ceased to be nurturing places, or where the liturgy has become a static and lifeless exercise on a Sunday morning. This tells us two very important things. One is that there is a growing desire among the laity for a deeper experience of prayer, and especially of liturgy. The other is that people expect to find a depth of prayer among religious.

My early years in religious life were blessed, in the sense that for the most part our spirituality was focused on the liturgy and the Divine Office, with a minimum of other "pious" practices. It was a strong and church-centered kind of spirituality. With renewal, many of us branched out into additional ways of enriching our spiritual experience, including centering prayer, Zen meditation, and an exploration (once forbidden) of the mystics and mystical prayer. While most communities would admit that in the early years of renewal there was a dropping off of community prayer (i.e., prayer together), for many there occurred a return to the idea of a community praying together on a regular basis while honoring the need for personal and private prayer time.

It is this enriched understanding and practice of a prayer life that is important to offer in our vocational work. The people who are seeking a life of service to God through service to God's people will be search-

ing as well for a way to be in a deeper relationship with the divine and to do it in company with others. Lately, in vocation literature that I see, I have noted a greater tendency to show the unity between who we are, why we are, what we do, and how we live spiritually and communally.

IMPROVEMENT OF INVITATION

In studying vocation literature and ads, I find myself caught on the horns of a dilemma: On one hand, I feel disappointed that they make all the communities seem so much the same; the uniqueness of each group does not come through clearly. On the other hand, I am glad that we do not emphasize our differences so much.

I believe that we need to let people see that to which they are being invited. It is not enough to say we are women or men involved in the work of the church, or that we are people who pray. Somehow, each group needs to speak clearly to the mission and ministries that are central, to the identity of the group, to its understanding and experience of community, and to its way of living a life of spiritual commitment. We are alike, and we are different. Some of that will only become apparent after the person makes a contact. If the literature can convey this only to a certain point, then it is even more important that conversations about the life of the group center around mission and ministry, identity, community, and spirituality. The invitation needs to be crafted to be true to the religious community and understandable to the potential member. If we can do this, then I think our vocational promotion efforts will be worthwhile. And in the end, God will give the increase if that is what is truly needed.

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Catherine M. Harmer, M.M.S., Ph.D.

The Mystery of Judas

Marie Beha, O.S.C., Ph.D.

Flinging down the silver pieces in the sanctuary, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. (Matt. 27:5)

What a tragic end: the ultimate self-defeat of suicide, finalizing and fulfilling choices that had moved from the dishonesty of petty thievery to the terrible betrayal of selling a friend for the price of a slave and sealing that bargain with a mocking kiss. The passion and death of Judas stand in stark contrast to the redemptive suffering of Jesus.

What went wrong? Was Judas not really called in the first place? Did he just slip into the apostolic college by mistake, his motives quite mixed and inadequately discerned? Was his formation program lacking in essentials, too long, too short? And what of those offering him spiritual direction—were they poorly prepared or lacking in perception? Was it perhaps the community that failed Judas, didn't understand or support him, didn't challenge or direct his efforts?

That Judas was never called in the first place seems unlikely, since we find him named among the twelve expressly called (Matt. 10:4). Judas was invited personally by Jesus; he had a vocation. He had likewise been gifted with some specific part in spreading the Good News of Jesus. What was his role? The gospel of Mark (3:19) makes an immediate identification: "Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him." It almost seems

as though Judas was cast from the beginning as the bad guy in salvation history; a betrayer was needed, and Judas got the part. While this explanation is clear enough, it seems to me totally inadequate. The dying/rising of Jesus was not just a mystery play, the world premiere of some religious epic. It was all real—terribly, terrifyingly real. Judas didn't just read a script; he gave personal answers. Judas didn't have a preordained role; he answered for himself. Judas was responsible for Judas.

And he was gifted with response-ability. Since Judas was called, he was also offered the capacity to respond. That is always the correlative of God's grace; it not only invites but also enables. Much of discernment relies on the practical realism of this criterion. When someone is truly called, capacity to live out that invitation follows. Doing so may not be easy—probably won't be—but it can be done. Doors do open, making it possible to proceed. The inevitable stretching of vocational choice enlarges personal capacity rather than causing it to degenerate into shriveling stress and strain. Growth follows change and eventually bears the good fruits of peace and joy.

EXAMINING JUDAS

All of which brings us back to our original question: What went wrong? Perhaps the circumstances of Judas' formation were unfavorable—too much

expected too soon. We know that Judas “kept the common purse” (John 12:6), a lot of responsibility for someone still “in formation.” We don’t usually choose a newcomer as community treasurer. But how much is too much is a judgment call, and in the case of the apostles, the one directing the formation program was Jesus.

In the gospel remembering of the early church, Judas “used to steal what was put into” the common purse (John 12:6); he was a petty thief. So his weakness may have been known way back at the beginning, at least to some of the other apostles. It seems quite likely that in the close living of that first apostolic community, Judas’ peers did discover what was going on. Their indignation would have been unrelied by any of the compassion learned from lifelong experience of their own weaknesses. After all, Judas was taking from the poor—from themselves—what little they had to bank on.

Did the other apostles mention their suspicions to Jesus? That also seems likely, since we know they did inquire of him about each other. For example, Peter asked about John’s future (“What about him?”), only to be rebuked, “What is that to you?” (John 21:21–22). Did the same thing occur when the other apostles reported their concerns about Judas? Good directors usually do keep the focus on the individual to whom they are speaking, refusing to be lured into the bypaths of critiquing others. Did Jesus ask on this occasion too, “What is that to you?” to highlight the motivation of the complainer? Then what happened? I can well imagine the other apostles red-faced over the initial embarrassment, and later tight-lipped with resentment. Jesus wasn’t listening; he would have to find out for himself what really was going on.

As for Judas, perhaps Jesus warned him privately, personally, and with all the love that was in his heart for each of these specially chosen individuals. In response, did Judas deny the charge, indignant that Jesus had even asked? Or did he acknowledge his weakness and promise amendment, relying on his own strength to resist future temptation? He may even have begun to reform his life but inevitably fell back into old patterns in times of crisis. Unable to acknowledge these repeated failures, he found himself living a split-level life, preaching Good News while living bad news.

Why didn’t Judas just leave the core group of disciples? He could have; others did. But Judas decided to stay. Being specially chosen shored up the weakened self-image that has plagued all of us since Adam and Eve. Additionally, it must have been thrilling to have been missioned by Jesus, to have the power to heal the sick, to drive out demons (Luke 9:1,2). Judas

saw possibilities for his own future as a kingdom builder. Even in the face of growing opposition from the Pharisee party, he consoled himself with promises of glory to come. Someday, soon, Jesus would show his power, and the world would be convinced. Then Judas would be there—ready. So he stayed.

But in the immediacy of the present, he kept on stealing, and making excuses for what he was doing: he had as much right as the “poor,” maybe even more. He worked hard and got paid nothing. Food was often inadequate, since what they ate depended on what had been given; lodging was equally insecure (Mark 6:6–11). It was no way for anyone to live. If Jesus couldn’t or wouldn’t provide, then he, Judas, would take care of himself. Jesus didn’t even seem to notice.

JESUS’ JUDGMENTS

Perhaps he really didn’t. Jesus had confidence in the men he had called. In the clearer vision of history’s review, that would prove to have been a mistake. And it is quite possible that Jesus did err in his human judgment, failing to distinguish the fine line that separates trust from overconfidence. After all, we do know that Jesus “increased in wisdom, and in years and in divine and human favor” (Luke 2:52); such growth often requires the risks of trial and error. We learn by making mistakes and doing better the next time, modifying our original judgment.

There are examples in the gospels of Jesus doing just that. Initially, he restricted his ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but a woman proved to him that even a gentile was entitled to the scraps that fell from the master’s table (Matt. 15:25). Finally, the post-Easter Jesus would send the apostles to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19)—quite a shift. However we theologize about such instances, they are certainly consonant with our experience of being human and adjusting our opinions in the light of contrary evidence.

But Jesus, it seems, did not modify his judgments about Judas; he continued to allow him to handle the community funds. And Judas continued to steal. Small failures were followed by greater ones; temptations to which he succumbed hardened into patterns of behavior. Yet Jesus kept trusting Judas, right up to the end. On Holy Thursday night, it was still possible for the other disciples to rationalize that when Jesus spoke to Judas, it was to send him on an errand of necessary business: to buy what was needed for the paschal meal (John 13:29).

Why leave someone in a position that exposes him to daily temptation? Many in positions of authority have to face similar sets of circumstances and com-

parably difficult decisions. Should an individual whose behavior shows signs of weakness be protected from possible future mistakes by being removed from harm's way? Or would the continued trust expressed by leaving the person in the exposed position be just the necessary weight of love and trust to counterbalance his or her inherent weakness? Both positions express real concern; both are heavy with risks. There is no one right answer.

HUMAN FRAILTY

In the end, we are all brought up short against the mystery of human freedom. A divine call can be accepted or resisted—not just initially but also every day. That is something we all know only too well. Well begun is just that: a start. What is needed is fidelity expressed in continuing response to life's changing circumstances and inevitable demands. Yet all of us fail and make many mistakes. None of us can promise ourselves or each other infallibility or indefectibility.

The critical question becomes not Will we fail? but What will we do when we fail? If we are warned, either by peers or by those in positions of authority, will we lie, deny what is going on, and persist in our self-defeating patterns? Will we rationalize our choices till we deceive even ourselves? Or will we begin to change, only to be disappointed when we fail once again? We had expected better of ourselves. We try again, harder, but with no better success. After a number of futile attempts, we become discouraged, our fragile egos shattered against the hard rock of repeated failure. Since we can't risk admitting our weaknesses, we don't dare ask for help, but we can't go on like this either. We look for some way out.

Judas did too, and he found one. The very desperation of his situation seemed to have sharpened his awareness, as is often the case. He listened to what Jesus was saying about suffering, about rejection. He heard the murmuring of the crowds, saw the mounting opposition of the Pharisees. While Peter and the others were still in denial ("God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you"—Matt. 16:22), Judas knew the truth. His growing doubts about Jesus hardened into a decision: he would leave, but in a way that would save something—perhaps even Jesus—from this bad situation. When faced with the inevitable results of the growing conflict with those in power, Jesus would certainly exercise his greater authority and save himself—and them. Surely this was what would happen.

Meanwhile, Judas would do a little careful bargaining—just in case. He knew it wouldn't be difficult getting access to the Pharisees. A few well-placed

hints would be enough; they were getting desperate. "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" (Matt. 26:14). Judas always looked out for Judas.

Thirty pieces of silver—the price of a slave. He had hoped for more, but this was something at least. Did Judas pause outside the house of the chief priest, money in hand, carefully counting the coins? It was a moment of decision. He could still go back, return the money, and leave. Jesus would never need to know. But what would happen then? By going up to Jerusalem, Jesus had walked right into the clutches of his enemies, and Judas with him. Now Judas had to save himself. Those thirty pieces of silver looked better all the time. He walked away into the gathering darkness.

THE UPPER ROOM

On the "first day of unleavened bread," the highest of holy days, the disciples prepared the Passover meal (Matt. 26:17, 19). They gathered in the upper room, taking their places at the common table, Judas with them. But Jesus seemed unable to enter fully into the familiar rituals; instead, he shattered the festive mood with his announcement, "One of you will betray me" (Matt. 26:21).

Stunned, they looked around at each other. One of them? That is what Jesus had said ("Surely, not I, Lord"—Matt. 26:22). The years of discipleship had given all of them this much self-knowledge; each knew he could be the one; Jesus had just told them so. They were "greatly distressed," but their first response was focused on themselves. Apparently, no one looked at Jesus and said, "Master, how terrible; this cannot be."

As for Judas, he didn't know where to look, what to say or do. Everyone else had asked their self-centered question; he could only do the same. "Surely, not I, Rabbi?" The answer came quickly but quietly: "You have said so" (Matt. 26:25).

Judas had condemned himself. It is what we always do when we sin. Jesus does not utter the sentence against us; we do so ourselves. We make our choices, and unless we change them, the consequences follow. But as long as we are alive, repentance remains a real possibility. We may not be able to reverse events, but we can reform our lives.

Judas could have thrown himself at the feet of Jesus and begged forgiveness. He had seen ample evidence of the reception that Jesus always gave to sinners ("Has no one condemned you; . . . neither do I. Go your way and from now on do not sin again"—John 8:10,11). But Judas couldn't receive forgiveness because he couldn't admit he was a sinner. Even though Jesus had named him "betrayers," that wasn't

how Judas saw himself. Long years of self-deception had so warped his sense of truth that Judas perceived himself as a savior of sorts, forcing Jesus to use his power and glory to save himself and claim his rightful throne. Yes, that was what he was doing. Jesus was the Messiah—they all knew that—but he seemed reluctant to act like one. Judas would hasten his reign and surely be rewarded by a special place in the kingdom to come.

His mind was spinning as he got up to leave the room. Perhaps at the doorway he hesitated a moment, looked back at Jesus; no, his decision was made. The gospel writers phrase it starkly: "Satan entered into him" (John 13:27). Judas had invited him; that is the only way the devil ever finds entrance. Judas walked out "and it was night" (John 13:30).

"Jesus, having loved his own unto the end" (John 13:1)—Judas still included!—proceeded with the familiar ritual of the paschal supper. On this night of all nights, he would concretize his enduring love in yet another way: "Take; this is my body; This is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:22–24). Did the apostles understand what was happening? Probably not, judging by what we know of their previous misunderstandings. But they did remember, and would celebrate over and over again, this Last Supper.

JUDAS' PLOT

While love was being lived out in the upper room, Judas hurried to implement his plan. It was perfect: he would go to the chief priests, get some soldiers to accompany him, and lead them, along with the crowd that was sure to follow, back to Jesus. Judas knew just where to look for him: in the garden. Jesus had spoken of going to this familiar place to pray—probably another of those long vigils that wearied them all. Well, this would be a short night.

Judas moved swiftly. He didn't want to think too much. The silence of that garden of prayer was rudely shattered. "Suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him" (Luke 22:47). The kiss—the agreed-upon sign that had seemed so clever in the planning but not now: "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" (Luke 22:48). At this very beginning of the passion, Jesus was still the master; he knew what was going on and said so. His question was one last appeal, one more call, one more long look of love. Judas dropped his eyes, not daring to see any more.

"Then they laid hands on Jesus and arrested him" (Mark 14:46). In the melee that followed, it was easy for Judas to get lost. But he didn't leave; he watched.

Surely, Jesus would act now. This was his chance. When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" They tried to defend him, but Jesus would have none of their violence (Luke 2:49–51).

Addressing the crowd—Judas included—Jesus asked, "Whom are you looking for?"

They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth."

"I am he," said Jesus. At that, "they stepped back and fell to the ground" (John 18:4–6). It was the moment of confrontation that Judas had expected, had hoped for. Jesus was the Messiah, the Promised One, the King who was to come. No one had any power over him; he had all the power. He would save himself and save all of them. "If you are looking for me, let these men go," Jesus declared (John 18:8).

AWFUL CONSEQUENCES

They were safe, saved—but Jesus was not. Judas could not believe his eyes. As he watched in terror, "the soldiers, their officers and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him" (John 18:12), then led him away. The way of the cross had begun.

"Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus" (John 18:15). But what of the other nine? They ran in any direction, concerned only with the immediate threat to themselves. And Judas? He melted into the crowd. That was easy; his action had found him some new friends, or at least some soldiers who were grateful that things had gone so smoothly after all.

Crowds provide anonymity; they did so for Judas. He would follow Jesus too. Perhaps there was still hope. Surely, when questioned by the high priest, Jesus would answer and defend himself. He did, but not in a way that would appease his accusers. Judas could have done much better. Nor did things go any better before Pilate. In both instances Jesus answered, as he had done so often before, by asking a counter-question. Only when pressed by Pilate did he state, at the end, "You say I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world" (John 18:37). When Judas heard the soldier's report of this, his hopes rose for a moment, only to fall just as rapidly. Jesus did not follow through on this claim to kingship with some appropriate show of strength. He only added, "For this I came into the world, to testify to the truth" (John 18:37).

Jesus had come not for wealth, not for power, but for truth. Judas repeated those last words over and over to himself: "for the truth." That wasn't what Judas was about; it never had been. But now the truth was what he feared the most.

Judas retreated to the fringes of the crowd, intending to slip away, but a strange fascination com-

pelled him to follow along, observing the unfolding of the passion from a safer distance. Though he could no longer see or hear Jesus, he could pick up bits of information from the screaming, jostling throng.

In a state of disbelief, he heard that most dreaded of chants: “Crucify him, crucify him” (John 19:6). At first he heard just a few voices—probably those of the chief priests and their police. Then the chorus swelled as the crowd joined in, not even knowing exactly what was happening but knowing well enough on whose side they had better be.

TRAGIC REPENTANCE

Judas left. He could bear no more. “When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented” (Matt. 27:3). He was sorry, more sorry than he had ever been in his whole life. But it was too late to prevent what was happening to Jesus. He felt the coins still in his purse. How he hated them now. He wanted to trample them underfoot. Then he thought of something he still could do: go back to those chief priests and elders and throw their money back at them. They were the ones most responsible. But newfound truth forced him to admit that he was equally responsible, and perhaps even more. On that first Good Friday, Judas would make his own profession of faith in Jesus; make his own confession: “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood” (Matt. 27:4).

“What is that to us?” They weren’t interested. What they wanted was being accomplished; they would soon be rid of that impostor Jesus. They would get rid of this man too; he was of no further use to them. “See to it yourself” (Matt. 27:4).

And that is what Judas did. “Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed and he went and hanged himself” (Matt. 27:5). Tragedy piled on tragedy. The Friday we now call “Good” was only so for those who followed Jesus on the way of the cross. It was so then; it is so now.

What went wrong with Judas? In retrospect, we can look back and see the litany of little choices, turns in the road, that were Judas’ daily decisions. The first time he stole, he felt remorse for what he had done; but the same choice repeated was made easier by practice. Those earlier choices were rationalized rather than acknowledged and repented; the long warning looks of Jesus were avoided or ignored. A weakness that fed on itself grew until it became a way of life. Exposed, it became a way of death.

It is the same with us: in the stark warning of the gospel, we are either with Jesus or against him (Luke 11:23). We may begin with small refusals, easily justified compromises. We are disappointed with ourselves but not really contrite. If challenged or corrected, we defend ourselves in anger or with counteraccusations. We begin to believe in our own rationalizations, making repentance almost impossible. No matter if we still walk in his company or are even numbered among his close followers; we have left him. By repeating our denials, we have become a no; we deny Jesus. But there may still be hope. We still have one final choice.

Judas did; so do we. What went wrong with Judas? At the end, maybe nothing did; perhaps in those last moments, as the rope of death tightened around his neck, Judas repented. We will never know. Perhaps, with his weakness redeemed by the saving blood of Jesus, he stole heaven too. Maybe, hopefully, undying love had found a way to make the day Good Friday for Judas too.



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Marital Spirituality

*Patrick J. McDonald, L.S.W., and
Claudette M. McDonald, L.S.W.*

In addition to tending to our own marriage of twenty-three years, we have worked with married couples within a therapeutic context for half our lives. Today, clinical social work, like most mental health professions, now makes ample room to explore the place, the forms, and the development of a relationship spirituality—something that was nearly impossible in the suspicious climate of twenty-five years ago.

We also carry on a regular dialogue with couples through a variety of workshops, parish weekends, study clubs, and creative growth experiences. These encounters offer opportunities to explore the nature of marriage within a formally defined spiritual context. We routinely hear couples use the same phrase, *marital spirituality*, to describe distinctly different realities. We observe not one marital spirituality but a variety of them.

"For us," says one couple, "marital spirituality is simply living love to the fullest, seeking its promises, and responding to its challenges. The personal God is not a factor, but the challenges of a genuine love touch us because love opens up deep truths, and they sustain us."

"It is knowing the God who cares for us and is concerned about the destiny of our family," says another. "God is with us in tangible ways, and we

respond in gratitude. Our prayer life is essentially that of sharing our gratefulness for God's gifts."

Still another couple asserts, "Marriage is a sacrament for us, so we do the best job we can with the demands of family life. We trust God to see us through, then don't worry about it."

Even though every couple we encounter understands the phrase *marital spirituality* differently, each shares an effort to discover a deep and genuine love—and that love becomes the ground for approaching the transcendent. As the couple's interaction goes, so goes their quest for the sacred. Some relationships turn on a personal relationship with God; some do not. What is meaningful to one couple may be a matter of indifference to another.

Whether the quest for God is implicit or explicit, every couple's spirituality reflects a process—a series of changes leading them from early romance to mature love. Marital spirituality is especially process-sensitive, for the couple's task is always to reach an accord about what forms of intimacy are important for them, what might be the significance of these forms for a deepening love, how they point to a couple's final destiny, and what role they play in exploring the transcendent.

It is futile to attempt to digest such a rich diversity into an all-encompassing definition of marital

spirituality. We prefer to suggest instead that every effort we note falls somewhere within one of four observable processes. In this article we examine those processes in some detail, reflect on their strengths and limitations, and then suggest some ideas that might further the discussion of the place, value, and content of emerging marital spiritualities.

PROCESS 1

A Spirituality of Sensitized Relating. This process focuses the couple's energy on the quality of the relationship itself. Their love comes alive through tender shows of affection, as well as through honest exchanges of difference. An ever-deepening sensitivity to the needs, moods, feelings, beliefs, concerns, hopes, and desires of one another becomes the central dynamic for their spirituality.

Mutual affirmation energizes the daily life of these spouses, then flows into wider family relationships. As the sensitizing process unfolds, the relationship opens to the expansive call of love. Marriage itself invites them to transcend the hardness of life and live free of the pain of alienation. It also invites them to share their love through ever-expanding circles of generativity. It opens out into a romance with the universe. It speaks to them of a destiny in the stars.

John Welwood, a current spokesperson for this view of love, describes the romantic swell of a maturing spiritual process:

Indeed, two people's love will have no room to grow unless it develops this larger focus beyond themselves. The larger arc of a couple's love reaches out toward a feeling of kinship with all of life, what Teilhard de Chardin calls "a love of the universe." Only in this way can love, as he puts it, "develop in boundless light and power."

Because the quality of interaction is the central focus for their process, the couple may or may not find room for a personal God. For many it makes no difference. The growth of their love is the primary measure of a rich union, and this moves them toward the transcendent.

Although this process is the most concrete and therefore the most understandable of spiritualities for couples, it can be problematic. Its more popular forms are aimed solely at feeling good or are encumbered by the limits of the couple's own resources, and therefore can be narrow in scope.

An assumption underlies most of the current literature about this process: that the couple possesses within their relationship everything they need to achieve a transcendent union. All they need to discover a rich mother lode of loving is to draw from their potential.

Spirituality at this level is usually reluctant to address the inevitable questions of a deepening spirituality: What does the couple's relationship have to do with the quest for God? What does it have to do with the hunger for justice? What meaning does it give to the inevitable periods of darkness, dryness, or conflict that are part of any married history? Does a couple's love have anything to do with the dynamic presence of God as unseen partner? Are they called to worship jointly as well as to feel good?

We often observe that the quest for high fulfillment in a marriage can be all-consuming, forcing great emphasis on the smooth working of the relationship. Other love values are minimized.

Common sense dictates that it is impossible for spouses to be sensitive and caring under all circumstances. A marriage can collapse under its own weight of unfulfilled expectations. Disappointment in marriage can lead to the death of a spirituality. In many cases, marriages remain closed to outside sources of energy and, like any closed system, run down.

Yet for those who live it well, spirituality within this process can be rich. It engenders great romantic imaginations and powerful swells of emotion as a couple expand their love toward the cosmos. It seems to sweep them up into a mystery greater than themselves.

PROCESS 2

A Sacramental Spirituality. This process begins with a view that marriage, with or without sensitized interaction, is sacred in itself. God is the founder of marriage, and spousal love is a concrete manifestation of God's creative presence. Thus, God's love is sacramentalized (made concrete and real) in the love of husband and wife for one another. The process matures for many couples as they assimilate these profound truths into a vital marriage, with God as the source and end of their love.

This view is familiar ground to most Catholics. Homilies on the day of marriage focus consistently on one theme: the inherent sacredness of the married state as both cause and sign of grace. Vatican Council II expresses this reality as follows: "Christian spouses have a special sacrament by which they are fortified and receive a special kind of consecration in the duties and dignities of their state."

Catholic couples especially find a meaningful association between marriage and sacramentality. The notion that God dwells in their marriage to the extent that they love one another is easily taken, because it invites them to reflect on what they often know intuitively about the goodness of marriage. They value

one another and try hard to be good spouses and parents. They know that God is somehow present in the chaos of family life.

For the couples who respond to the church's invitation to become consecrated, a practical sacramentalizing of their marriage begins to take shape. They find themselves becoming sensitized to the awareness that every effort to love one another somehow makes concrete God's love for them.

They are not necessarily sophisticated theologically or highly skilled in prayer, but they know their own experiences and sense God's presence in their efforts to create a family. They respond well to anyone who helps them articulate their experiences.

Although this approach to marital spirituality is valuable in itself, carrying the authority of Catholicism with it, its implementation can be shortsighted. Some couples seriously reflect on the inherent sacredness of marriage and live a thoughtful and integrated spirituality. When they do so, it undergirds a real sensitizing of the relationship and gives deep meaning to every effort to learn to love, problem-solve, and affirm one another.

In a weaker interpretation, sacramentality becomes equated with rigid role definitions, male-dominated divine plans, and themes of control and power—all of which tend to evoke a negative response in women. We continue to discover sophisticated Catholic couples who derive little from a sacramental view, except for a few basic truths.

When used well, however, the notions that God lives in a couple's union, blesses their interaction, and drives everything about their spirituality can provide a powerful impetus to open up a rich marriage.

Even in couples less energized by this approach, these concepts make room for the dynamic of God's love within their efforts and therefore can help them transcend the limits of human interaction. The sacramentality firmly anchors a couple in sacred space and gives them hope grounded in God's continued care for them.

PROCESS 3

A Shared Quest for the Loving God. This process invites the couple to seriously enter into a deliberately reflective mode, for the couple moves into a mutually affirmed exploration of the fuller implications of God's presence in their interaction. The shared process can be grounded in a sacramental foundation, or it can flow from other sources. At its core, it affirms a personal God who is genuinely invested in the intimate life of the seeking couple. As they open up their lives to a serious quest, we routinely observe these components of their developing spirituality:

A love of shared prayer. Driven by a shared hunger for God, they open themselves to the riches contained in the Scriptures and other source materials. Their deepening consciousness of the dynamic of God's love becomes an orienting focus for their lives. Prayer nourishes them. It helps them keep in mind their ideals for genuine love and brings an ever-deepening sensitivity to God's care for them. Thus, the couple evolves toward a shared journey of the soul.

A sense of God's presence with them. The legacy of shared prayer and the invitation to develop a new awareness open the couple to a more authentic dialogue with one another and with God. Their interaction becomes sensitized through a belief that God is loving them into a deeper relationship. God, in fact, becomes intimately involved in every dimension of their being a couple, and this invites them to become aware of God as a God for them.

A sense of justice. The shared process of knowing and loving God, especially if grounded in the Scriptures, will not allow a couple to simply consume one another or measure the quality of their relationship by how good it feels. They develop a concern for justice. This might relate to their own children, their extended family, works of ministry, or a passion for social justice. The marriage itself evolves toward oasis, ground, foundation, source, expression of self-possession, and deep security. This grounding gives the couple the home base needed to walk in justice.

They work hard to be sensitive and loving, for they know that they are deeply in love, and they enjoy the process of growing in love. Their shared dialogue, firmly grounded in prayer, reminds them of the great gift of their marriage. They become more flexible with one another because they know that God loves them completely, with all their faults, shortcomings, and foibles. They learn to love each other with the same unconditional love.

The flowering of this process, because it asks so much of the couple, brings with it increasing demands for time, reflection, personal space for the quest, and the purification asked of those who come to know God. Not every couple desires to sustain the effort required by, or enter into the depths of, this process. It is difficult to maintain such an effort while handling the ever-increasing demands of a growing family.

Couples often see the value of this process but have a hard time making it practical. We constantly encourage them to persevere in their efforts, reevaluate their priorities, reclaim their space, and focus on a deeper prayer life. Some hear us; some don't.

As in all spiritualities that begin to mature, then weaken, the couple can enjoy an early stage of optimism but then lose their moorings. Others are unable

to find a supportive community that fosters this kind of growth, so the initiative dies.

In all, this process offers a rich spirituality that leads to deep union with God and with one another. The couple discovers that they live a paradox: the more they seek God together, the closer they grow, at the same time understanding that they are uniquely different persons. They learn to love and respect one another in these differences while intimacy matures in ever-fresh forms. In ways they struggle to understand, God slowly becomes the ultimate energy that drives their efforts.

PROCESS 4

Contemplative Union. Misunderstandings abound about the place of contemplation in marriage, but the same can be said about understanding contemplation within other contexts. As Francis Tuoti writes (in his book *Why Not Be a Mystic?*), “‘Mysticism,’ together with its sister word, ‘contemplation,’ are the most misunderstood, misapplied, and ‘bloodied’ words in the religious vocabulary.”

We suggest that *contemplation* describes the couple’s shared awareness that God dwells lovingly and tangibly in the depths of married love. This experience becomes the center of marriage. Both husband and wife are grounded in a deep relationship with God. The experience of God in every dimension of their life allows the couple to live out the full implications of this dwelling. They see one another as gifts from God and therefore are beautifully sensitive to the full reality of the blossoming of these gifts.

They thrive on the daily practice of individual and shared prayer and live in a confident, comfortable familiarity with God as the center of all. Their experience of the compassionate God makes them compassionate to one another. Their deep compassion reflects the heart of God’s love and draws them into God’s center.

Although this process flows as easily as the air they breathe, couples who have arrived there have generally paid a heavy price for these gifts. They have struggled with making marriage work. They have learned to communicate. They have been through trial and suffering and are determined not to be beaten by marital strife and uncertainty.

They know each other’s person, complete with strengths and shortcomings, and they have learned to love one another deeply. Thus, deep sensitivity, genuine honesty, and pervasive gratitude characterize their marriage.

They share the confidence that reflects the hard work they have invested in creating a good marriage. If they have children, they still find time to create a

prayerful atmosphere in the home and manage to place a priority on their being a couple. They know their identity as a couple.

Their relationship with God is deep and personal. They daily weigh the presence of God and speak openly of their destiny. Their process carries them beyond themselves to a developed sense of justice and an affirmation that they belong not to one another but to God.

The dynamic action of the compassionate God in their lives supports them during times of darkness, for they know God as a loving and loyal God *for them*. They are sustained during tense times by a patience that flows from experientially knowing God’s love for them.

Although contemplation in an individual sense has many of the same characteristics as shared contemplation in marriage, we see a uniqueness within marriage. Each spouse enjoys a refined relationship with God, but the sharing of this presence offers a broad dimension to the contemplative experience. God language, distinct sexual energy, significant experiences, and manifold joys and disappointments all reflect the fullness of God’s love. Thus, the narrowness that can be part of an isolated spirituality is amended by the honesty, feedback, sharing, and creative exchanges of two entirely different people experiencing God.

They make plenty of room for each other’s processes. A deep appreciation for one another’s uniqueness flows from their shared prayers, reflections, struggles, and efforts to reach the other. All exchanges challenge them to appreciate the uniqueness of the other. God uses the differences in their persons to bring them to an appreciation of the diversity of the universe. The contemplative spirit allows them to deepen their awareness that God is all in all, and the sharing of this experience brings a sense of fulfillment to the marriage.

This unique process of marital spirituality is enjoyed by relatively few couples. Moreover, there seems to be little information available about the dynamics of this kind of spirituality. Because couples have a difficult time finding a guiding articulation about its development, they often live with dark nights about the validity of their experiences. Spiritual direction is sometimes sought by one or both spouses, but direction’s orientation toward individual spirituality places the specific gifts of marriage in a secondary position.

The pull toward the profound richness of a shared contemplative life becomes more powerful as it develops, yet this pull can actually isolate a couple: it is difficult for them to find other couples with whom they can share their experience of God. Couples who

live this process become impatient with the quest for material possessions, status, entertainment, and the leisure life—all hallmarks of modern marriage. Their dark nights can actually deepen as they respond to the call to spend more time in reflection. This removes them from frivolous interaction with other couples. They hunger for like-spirited companions while preferring the quiet of a deepening contemplative mode.

In all, this process places emphasis on the deep prompting of God's Spirit, and thoughts about the future are grounded in the fullness of life that God promises. As God becomes more active in the life of the couple, their dark nights lead them to trust completely God's invitation to enter into the depths of love where God dwells.

The few couples we know who live this process have arrived at it through a deep trust that their destiny is in God's hands and that God will never abandon them. They live with great confidence and peace.

PROCESS REVISITED

Each one of these processes represents a distinct approach to marital spirituality. In its own way, each aims for the transcendent. As couples grow in their shared life, we find that some of them progress through all four processes in an orderly fashion, beginning with an effort to love more deeply and eventually arriving at a contemplative union. Each step in their long journey brings its respective rewards and challenges.

Each process represents a pure model of growth, so we discover overlaps, mixes, and combinations of each of these models as a couple's process blossoms. We insist that there is no orderly fashion in which a couple should move through these processes. In many cases, the opening up of the transcendent flows from hard lessons related to loyalty, love, and sometimes even infidelity.

We find that couples decide which is the appropriate process for them and determine how deeply they will enter into the depths of love. The regulatory mechanisms that are a part of any marriage inform them that they will be comfortable for a time in a certain place. While they remain there, they may gain great richness. When they are ready to move on, they do so, often guided by a shared intuition about what is best for them.

We see couples grow exponentially when they open their lives to shared prayer. God is faithful to God's promises, and when a couple consciously invites God into their lives, God responds beautifully. There is

no end to the richness—nor do love's challenges diminish.

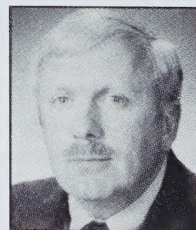
Marriage is sensitive to any change in process. Even quiet changes within the heart of an individual spouse must be integrated into a fresh style of relating, or intimacy suffers. In every process, a balance must be maintained between individual needs and a shared life.

These processes say more about how couples integrate a marital spirituality than about God's creative initiative. That cannot be contained within any process. Yet the mystery of God's love manifests itself in diverse ways within married love. It defies easy description and always brings surprises. What makes our work so enjoyable is not the discipline of placing couples within some tight category, but seeing how freely God bestows rich gifts upon any couple open to receiving them. Their stories captivate us.

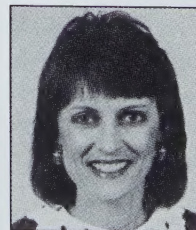
The love of God freely expresses itself in the uniqueness of each marital union. In his book *The New Man*, Thomas Merton captures the uniqueness of God's initiative and the couple's response to it in this simple statement: "In the union of man and woman, it is no longer words that are the symbols of the mystery of God's holiness, but persons."

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